

# God's Word for Today

## Isaiah

### Herald of the Messiah

*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.*

**Isaiah 9:6–7**

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# Lesson 1

## Isaiah, Prophet to a Rebellious Nation (Isaiah 1:1–6:13)

### Theme Verse

“ ‘Come now, let us reason together,’ says the LORD. ‘Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool’ ” (**Isaiah 1:18**).

### Goal

We seek to begin to comprehend Isaiah’s message as one of both sin and grace, Law and Gospel.

### What’s Going On Here?

Isaiah is called by God to speak His message to a rebellious people. In these chapters, Isaiah confronts God’s people with their sins of pride and idolatry. He minces no words as he unmasks their smug self-satisfaction and as he describes the coming day of God’s judgment and wrath.

But God’s prophet also preaches God’s Word of Gospel to those who will respond to the Lord’s gracious invitation, “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD. ... He will teach us His ways, so that we may walk in His paths” (**Isaiah 2:3**).

### Searching the Scriptures

1. Read **Isaiah 1**. Like all of God’s Old Testament prophets, Isaiah sees, really sees, the condition of God’s people. Isaiah paints several word pictures in this passage that portray the dire straits in which God’s people find



themselves. List some of the pictures of sin and rebellion painted by the prophet and the verses in which those portraits appear.

2. Isaiah also sees a beautiful picture of God's love (**1:18**). If you were to commission an artist to paint that picture, what details would you want included? Explain.

Read **Isaiah 2:1-5**. "In the last days" here and elsewhere in Scripture refers to the first coming of Christ and usually includes the entire New Testament era that will conclude with Christ's second coming. This passage is a poem built around one central thought. That thought is expressed in two phrases found at the center of the poem. Reread these words (the middle two phrases of **verse 3**: "He will teach us ... in His paths").

3. What does it mean to learn the Lord's ways and to walk in the Lord's paths? (See also **Psalms 86:11; 143:8-10**.)

4. We do not learn the Lord's ways and walk in His paths by drumming up the desire or the ability to do so inside our own hearts. It does not happen as we try hard. How do the verses from **Isaiah** and those from **Psalms 86** and **143** describe God's role in this process?

The phrases *Mt. Zion, the mountain of the LORD's temple, the mountain of the LORD, the house of the God of Jacob, Zion, and Jerusalem* all refer to nearly the same thing—the place where God meets His people.

5. Where did God meet His Old Testament people (**Exodus 40:34–35; 1 Kings 8:10–13**)? Where does God meet us today (**Matthew 18:20; Acts 2:38–39; 1 Corinthians 11:23–26**)?

6. Read **Isaiah 2:6–11**. Isaiah notes how wealthy Judah is. While wealth is not inherently evil, riches and personal security often lead people down the path away from God's light and into the darkness of idolatry. Why do you think this happens? (See **Isaiah 31:1**.)

**Isaiah 2:12–4:1** makes a unified point. The wrath of God will fall on His rebellious people of that day—and also, in the final judgment, on all who have stubbornly stood in opposition to God's justice and love. God's judgment will show itself in the breakdown of social order in Judah. Chaos will result. Read this section as you have time inside or outside of class.

Read **4:2–6**. Note that this picture of God's grace and the picture of that same grace in **2:1–5** form bookends, as it were, around the picture of judgment in **2:6–4:1**.

7. What, specifically, does God promise His people in **4:2–6**? Where in these verses do you see the Messiah, your Savior?

8. Read **5:1–7**. In the Scriptures, vineyards often symbolize God's people. What did the Lord do to cultivate His vineyard? What good reason can be given for its unfruitfulness?

After the song of the vineyard, Isaiah goes on to give many specific examples of fruitlessness. He prefaces several of these examples with the word *woe*. Read **5:8–30** as you have time inside or outside of class.

9. Read **6:1–8**. Describe what Isaiah sees and hears. Why do you think Isaiah confesses his own sins? Why does he confess the sins of his people? (See **1 Corinthians 12:12–26**.)

10. How does God (through the seraph) respond to Isaiah's confession? Since Isaiah's ministry involves speaking for God, why would this specific assurance of forgiveness (absolution) be particularly meaningful for him?

11. Reread **Isaiah 6:8**. The words translated "I am ruined" (**verse 5**) likely mean "dumbstruck," silenced by the fear of destruction. What does Isaiah say when he first speaks again?

12. Read **6:9–13**. The people would undergo some terrible consequences because of their hard-hearted rebellion (**verses 11–12**). What words in **verse 13** speak of the hope Judah could have?

## **The Word for Us**

1. **Isaiah 1:29–31** refers to the idolatry into which God's people had fallen. The "sacred oaks" and "gardens" were sites reserved for idol worship and sexual immorality. Isaiah says the people will someday be ashamed and disgraced as they remember what they did there. What idols in the lives of God's people today are shameful and an embarrassment?

2. How can God's promise to cleanse and restore His people (**1:25–27**) also comfort you today as you think about the false gods on which you sometimes rely?

3. How do our lives become lives of fruitfulness rather than barrenness? (See **John 15:4–8**.)

## Closing

Read or sing together these stanzas of "Holy, Holy, Holy":

Holy, holy, holy! All the saints adore Thee,  
Casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea;  
Cherubim and seraphim falling down before Thee,  
Which wert and art and evermore shalt be.

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!  
All Thy works shall praise Thy name in earth and sky and sea.  
Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty!  
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!

## **Lesson 2**

# **Oh, Come, Oh, Come, Immanuel! (Isaiah 7:1-9:7)**

### **Theme Verse**

“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” (**Isaiah 7:14**).

### **Goal**

We aim to understand Isaiah's prophecy of Immanuel and his prophecy that a light would dawn on those living in the darkness of sin and under the shadow of death.

### **What's Going On Here?**

Isaiah wrote eloquently about the sign of Immanuel. Jesus is the ultimate fulfillment of that sign. In Jesus, God is with us. In Jesus God took the punishment for our sins upon Himself, thus obtaining for us the salvation and deliverance we could never obtain by our own effort, our own scheming. We bow in reverence and receive from our Immanuel the peace we so desperately need.

### **Searching the Scriptures**

1. Read **Isaiah 7:1-9**. Today's reading includes a number of historical players. Note the identity and position of each of these people:

- Ahaz

- Rezin
- Pekah (see also **2 Kings 15:27–31**)

2. The year is approximately 735/734 B.C.. As the account begins, what crisis occupies the thoughts of Ahaz and his advisors (**Isaiah 7:1–2**)?

3. Knowing His people's problem, God—the heavenly King—takes the initiative. He knows Ahaz will not come to Him (see **2 Kings 16:1–4**), so He sends Isaiah to Ahaz. What does this tell you about God and His concern for His people? Contrast what Aram/Syria and Ephraim/Israel say (**Isaiah 7:5–6**) with what Judah's true King says (**7:7–9**) about Judah's future.

4. Read **7:10–25**. God is not about to give up on Ahaz. Why do you think God offers Ahaz a sign? Why do you think Ahaz refuses?

5. In grace, God gives Ahaz a sign anyway. What is it and what does it signify (see also **Matthew 1:18–23**)?

6. Rather than trusting God and His promise to deliver, Ahaz decides he must try to save himself and his people apart from God's help. Read about his plan in **2 Kings 16:5–9**. To whom does Ahaz turn for help? Reread **Isaiah 7:17–25**. What unexpected, monstrous consequences will grow from Ahaz' rebellious plan?

7. Read **8:1–10**. Isaiah paints a powerful word picture in **8:6–8**. The phrase "the gently flowing waters of Shiloah" refers to a small stream that may have formed part of the water supply in Jerusalem. With what are these peaceful waters contrasted in **8:7–8**?

As you have time inside or outside of class, read **8:11–18**, which contains a warning from God to Isaiah not to follow the way of the people of Judah and Isaiah's response.

8. As a backdrop for the wonderful promises found in **Isaiah 9**, read **8:19–22**. Then read **9:1–7**. If possible, locate on a map the land Joshua allotted to the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali at the time God's people conquered Canaan. Then compare **Matthew 4:12–17** with **Isaiah 9:1–2**. How would Jesus fulfill Isaiah's prophecy?

**Isaiah 9:6–7** is a birth announcement—the birth announcement of the coming Messiah. This announcement is 700 years or so early, but it contains such good news that the heavenly Father wants the world to know what He will do through His Son.



9. See how Jesus fulfilled the prophecies about Him contained in the four names listed:

- Wonderful Counselor (**John 14:16; 15:26**)
- Mighty God (**Matthew 28:18**)
- Everlasting Father (**John 14:9–10**)
- Prince of Peace (**Ephesians 2:14–18**)

## **The Word for Us**

1. God is faithful even when we waver in faith. Read **Romans 8:32**. How can Christ's cross help you overcome the guilt of faithlessness? How can the cross increase your confidence in your Lord's promises in future times of crisis?

2. The sign of Immanuel was earthly, tangible evidence of God's very real presence in the midst of His people. What earthly, tangible signs provide evidence that God is still among His people today? When have these signs brought you particularly powerful comfort?

3. Compare **Isaiah 9:2** with **John 8:12**. Explain how Jesus has fulfilled this prophecy in your life.

## Closing

Read or sing together the following stanzas of “Oh, Come, Oh, Come, Emmanuel”:

Oh, come, O Key of David, come,  
And open wide our heav’nly home;  
Make safe the way that leads on high,  
And close the path to misery.  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel  
Shall come to you, O Israel!

Oh, come, our Dayspring from on high,  
And cheer us by Your drawing nigh;  
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,  
And death’s dark shadows put to flight.  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel  
Shall come to you, O Israel!

## **Lesson 3**

# **“His Hand Is Still Upraised” (Isaiah 9:8–12:6)**

### **Theme Verse**

“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’ ” (**Isaiah 12:4**).

### **Goal**

We seek to better understand God’s justice and mercy and to trust more deeply in the God who is our strength, our song, and our salvation.

### **What’s Going On Here?**

God’s hand is upraised in judgment on all who rebel against Him, on all who in arrogance insist on creating their own security, their own happiness, their own prosperity.

God’s hand of judgment fell fully on Christ Jesus, the Prince of Peace, great David’s greater Son, who hung on the cross and absorbed all of God’s wrath against human sin.

Now, those of us who live as citizens of Christ’s peaceful kingdom enjoy many of the blessings He lived and died to earn for us. As we look forward to the coming of that kingdom in all its fullness, we continue to spread the Good News of the kingdom so that our God’s great name may be known in all the earth.

### **Searching the Scriptures**

Read **Isaiah 9:8–10:4**. Today’s reading might correctly be called a song of judgment in four stanzas. The song’s refrain carries a tone of fore-

boding, but also a hint of hope. Read the refrain from **9:12, 17, 21**, and **10:4**.

1. What words of the refrain express the judgment of God? From what might someone listening to this song derive hope?

2. Summarize the sin of God's people that each of the stanzas condemns:

- **9:8–12**

- **9:13–17**

- **9:18–21**

- **10:1–4**

3. Read **10:5–19**. Though God uses Assyria, He will still judge and punish its wickedness. How would you summarize the basic charge the Judge of the universe makes against Assyria? (See especially **10:12, 13, 15**.)

4. Read **10:20–23**. Who is included in the remnant of Israel? If you had been among Isaiah's first hearers, would all this talk about the remnant give you comfort or more reason for fear?

As you have time inside or outside of class read **10:24–34**, which contains more comforting news about God's judgment of Assyria, the oppressor of His people.

Previously in his book, Isaiah referred to the coming Messiah as "Prince of Peace" (**9:6**). **Isaiah 11** expands on that title, describing the Messiah's peaceful kingdom. Read **11:1–16**.

5. What examples can you give to show that sin lies at the root of all the lack of peace in individual lives and in human society?

6. Compare **Isaiah 11:4** with **Matthew 5:3–5**. The poor (needy) and the meek are not those without enough money to take care of themselves. Who, then, are they?

7. Is the promise that the Prince of Peace will judge the poor, that He will give them justice, good news or bad news for you? Explain.

8. In what way is the curse of sin (**Genesis 3:14–19**) reversed in Christ's peaceful kingdom according to the picture painted here? When will this peaceful kingdom come in its fullness? (See **Romans 8:18–21**; **1 John 3:1–2**; and **Revelation 21:1–4**.)

9. Read **Isaiah 12:1–6**. Thinking of everything God had done and planned to do for His people, Isaiah bursts into a song of praise. Compare the words of Isaiah's hymn of praise with **Exodus 15:1–18** and **Revelation 15:3–4**. What similarities in thought and wording do you find? What conclusions can you draw from these similarities?

## **The Word for Us**

1. When are you most likely to take credit for your own accomplishments? What makes this so spiritually deadly?

2. How does God's control and use of evil nations comfort you?

3. In what ways is God your strength? your song? your salvation?

## Closing

Reread **Isaiah 11:1–3a**. The reference to the sevenfold gifts of the Spirit in the first stanza of the hymn below comes from **Isaiah 11:2–3a**. The Spirit with whom Christ was anointed was poured out on the church on Pentecost. Now that same Spirit bestows His sevenfold gifts on Christ's people. Read or sing together the following stanzas of "Come, Holy Ghost, Our Souls Inspire."

Come, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire,  
Ignite them with celestial fire;  
Spirit of God, You have the art  
Your gifts, the sev'nfold, to impart.

Your blest outpouring from above  
Is comfort, life, and fire of love.  
Illumine with perpetual light  
The dullness of our blinded sight.

Teach us to know the Father, Son,  
And you, of both, to be but one  
That, as the ceaseless ages throng,  
Your praise may be our endless song!

## Lesson 4

# Fallen Is Babylon the Great (Isaiah 13:1–23:18)

### Theme Verse

“The LORD will have compassion on Jacob; once again He will choose Israel and will settle them in their own land. Aliens will join them and unite with the house of Jacob” (**Isaiah 14:1**).

### Goal

We aim to understand “Babylon” as the world system that throughout history has set itself up against the Lord and against His Christ and take comfort in the ultimate defeat of this world system. We seek to gain a greater appreciation for our God who loves even His enemies.

### What’s Going On Here?

These chapters begin what Bible scholars have called “the Gentile oracles.” God condemns a number of Gentile nations for their rebellion and stubborn pride. Even as our Lord does that, He comforts His people with the promise that their oppression under these nations will soon come to an end. He will pour out His wrath in full on “all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness” as Paul writes in **Romans (1:18)**. God will destroy His enemies. He will bring His people relief.

But the Lord also has another purpose in mind for these acrid declarations of His judgment. In love, God speaks Law to show sinners their need for a Savior. He invites all people of every nation to receive His great gifts of repentance and faith in the one who is the world’s only hope.



# Searching the Scriptures

**Isaiah 13–23** pronounces God's judgment on the enemies of His people. In 722 B.C. (during the time of Isaiah's ministry), Samaria, the capital of Israel (the Northern Kingdom), was destroyed by the Assyrians. The people were taken into captivity. Judah, the Southern Kingdom, though threatened by Assyria, was spared by God and remained an independent nation. But in 587 B.C., Jerusalem, the capital of Judah, would be destroyed by the Babylonians. The first prophetic oracle in this section of Isaiah's book addresses Babylon.

1. Read **Isaiah 13:1–22**. What will "the day of the LORD" described in this chapter be like for Babylon (**13:6–9**)?

2. What clues in **13:10, 11** and **13** hint that God is not here addressing the ancient Babylonian Empire exclusively? (Compare **Joel 2:31; Luke 21:25–28**; and **Hebrews 12:26**.)

3. Read **Genesis 1:28** and **11:1–9**. In what ways has Babylon (Babel) symbolized the rebellion of the sinful world system of thought and behavior almost from the beginning?

4. Read **Isaiah 14:1–23**. The main part of this reading can be called a taunt song against the king of Babylon. From reading the song of joy his victims would some day sing at his defeat. What details can you find to illustrate what this king's reign would be like?

5. Reread **14:13–14**. How are this king's words similar to those of the rebels at Babel? (See **Genesis 11:4**.)

6. In what ways is this king of Babylon like “the man of lawlessness,” the Antichrist, described in **2 Thessalonians 2:3–8**?

Reread **Isaiah 14:1–4**. Right in the middle of His denunciation of Babylon, God stops to address His own people. (As the context indicates, “Israel” here means the whole people of God rather than the Northern Kingdom only.)

7. Contrast the future of God's people with those who pridefully oppose Him. What clue in **verse 1** tells that not just the people of Israel can count on God's mercy?

God now turns His attention from one of the archenemies of His people (“Babylon”) to other nations. Read **Isaiah 14:24–18:7** as you have time inside or outside of class.

8. Read **Isaiah 19:1–25**. Isaiah thunders God’s threats of impending judgment against Egypt. Still he holds out hope. What phrases here speak most powerfully to you of that hope? What does this tell you about God’s concern for all the earth’s people, even those who are His enemies?

More oracles against Gentile nations are found in **Isaiah 20–21**. Read these chapters as you have time inside or outside of class.

Now God turns His attention to Judah. This oracle is an especially heavy one. Read **Isaiah 22**.

9. **Verses 15–25** contrast Shebna (an unfaithful steward of the king) with Eliakim (a faithful servant). Shebna holds a position of trust in the kingdom, a position similar to a prime minister or chief of staff today. Shebna should be giving the king wise counsel during a time of national crisis. What occupies Shebna’s time and concern instead? Shebna’s attitude is typical of Judah’s unfaithful spiritual and political leaders. How is Eliakim different?

10. Read **Revelation 1:17–18; 3:7**. Compare Jesus’ description of Himself with the description in **Isaiah 22:22**. How does it comfort you to know that Jesus is the Key of David, that He holds “the keys of death and Hades” (**Revelation 1:18**)?

## The Word for Us

1. List as many ways as you can that God's people are oppressed and how they suffer and experience turmoil at the hands of the world system today.

2. How does it comfort you to know that God does not ignore wickedness, that He will not overlook the harm the Babylons of this world inflict on His people?

3. Read **Isaiah 17:10**. When are you personally most likely to forget God your Savior, just as Isaiah's audience had? Name (to yourself only, if you wish) at least three specific sets of circumstances if you can. What has happened in your life or in your relationship with your Lord as a result of this forgetfulness? (Compare your own results with those of the people described in **17:10–11**.) Where can you turn when you realize your sin (see **Psalms 65:1–5**)?

## Closing

Read or sing together the following stanzas of "Jesus Shall Reign":

Jesus shall reign where'er the sun  
Does its successive journeys run;  
His kingdom stretch from shore to shore  
Till moons shall wax and wane no more.

People and realms of ev'ry tongue  
Dwell on His love with sweetest song;  
And infant voices shall proclaim  
Their early blessings on His name.

Let ev'ry creature rise and bring  
Honors peculiar to our King;  
Angels descend with songs again,  
And earth repeat the loud amen.

## Lesson 5

# “In That Day” (Isaiah 24:1–27:13)

### Theme Verses

“On this mountain [the LORD] 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. The LORD has spoken” (Isaiah 25:7–8).

### Goal

We seek to understand and find comfort in Isaiah’s description of the end times.

### What’s Going On Here?

In love, our Savior has done everything necessary for our salvation. He has defeated Satan and the death we deserved because of our sin by absorbing the wrath of God in our place. When He returns, death will be swallowed up in victory. He has planted us in His church and enables us to bear abundant fruit. We praise Him now and into eternity.

### Searching the Scriptures

The chapters you will read this week (Isaiah 24–27) have been called by some Bible scholars “Isaiah’s apocalypse.” The word *apocalypse* means “an unveiling or revealing of something that was at one time unknown.” Commonly, the word refers to the end times, to the Last Day and the events leading up to it.

1. Read **24:1–25:5**. How do the judgments described differ from the Gentile oracles you read in the previous lesson (**Isaiah 13–23**)?

2. Read **25:6–12**. Describe the details of God's great banquet as Isaiah pictures it in **25:6–9**.

3. The Bible uses banquet imagery often as it pictures the glories of heaven. What additional details does God reveal in **Matthew 22:1–14**; **Revelation 19:7–9**; **21:2–4**?

4. Read **26:1–11**. What city do you think Isaiah is writing about in **26:1–2**? (See **Hebrews 12:22–23** and **Revelation 21:1–2**.)

5. In what ways are God's people "the righteous nation," "the nation that keeps faith" (**Isaiah 26:2**; **Philippians 3:8–9**)?

6. What clue does **Isaiah 26:3** give about how to live in God's perfect peace? (Note who is acting in **verse 3a.**)

7. Read **26:12–21**. This prayer of praise points to the futility of human effort to accomplish salvation. What phrases in each of these verses make that point?

- **Verse 12**

- **Verse 14**

- **Verses 17–18**

8. What contrast do you see between **26:13–14** and **26:19**?

9. Read **27:1–13**. Compare **Revelation 12:9–10; 20:10** and **Isaiah 27:1**. Who is Leviathan? With what kind of end does he meet?



10. Now Isaiah sings a new vineyard song. Review the first song of the vineyard in **Isaiah 5:1–7**. In what significant way does this song differ from the new vineyard song in **27:2–6**?

11. **Isaiah 27:7–11** portrays how God will, through a carefully controlled judgment, bring Israel to a point where the people can be restored to their land. But **27:9** speaks to contemporary Christians too. “By this, then, will Jacob’s guilt be atoned for, and this will be the full fruitage of the removal of his sin,” Isaiah writes. On what day did God’s wrath fall in such a way that all our guilt was removed? Explain.

12. Reread **27:12–13**. Here Isaiah promises that God will collect all His people one by one and bring them home from exile to “the holy mountain in Jerusalem,” where they will worship Him. Compare these verses with **Isaiah 2:2–4; 24:23; Matthew 24:31; 1 Corinthians 15:52; Revelation 21:2–3**. What similarities do you find that indicate that here Isaiah is also speaking of the Day of Judgment and the believers’ deliverance in heaven?

## The Word for Us

1. Reread **Isaiah 25:1–5**, a song celebrating the end of tyranny. Which words give you special comfort and joy as you think about your life now and as you consider the coming Day of Judgment?

2. In what ways for you personally is Holy Communion a foretaste of the eternal celebration of heaven?

3. How do you know for sure your Lord has reserved a place for you in His heavenly banquet hall? (See **John 3:16** and **1 John 5:11–13**.) (*Note:* God extends to all people His invitation to enjoy eternal life with Him, but sadly not all respond. If you have never responded to God's invitation extended by the Holy Spirit, read **Isaiah 55:1–6** and **2 Corinthians 5:20–6:2** and prayerfully receive God's grace and forgiveness now.)

## Closing

Read or sing together the following stanzas of "Jerusalem, My Happy Home":

Jerusalem, my happy home,  
When shall I come to thee?  
When shall my sorrows have an end?  
Thy joys when shall I see?

O happy harbor of the saints,  
O sweet and pleasant soil!  
In thee no sorrow may be found,  
No grief, no care, no toil.

Jerusalem, my happy home,  
Would God I were in thee!  
Would God my woes were at an end,  
Thy joys that I might see!

## **Lesson 6**

# **Sight for the Spiritually Blind (Isaiah 28:1–33:24)**

### **Theme Verses**

“In that day the deaf will hear the words of the scroll, and out of gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind will see. Once more the humble will rejoice in the LORD; the needy will rejoice in the Holy One of Israel” (**Isaiah 29:18–19**).

### **Goal**

We seek to understand and heed Isaiah’s warnings about spiritual blindness and complacency and then trust in God alone for all the blessings of this life and the life to come.

### **What’s Going On Here?**

Isaiah continues to prophesy against those who are blind in their sin and complacent in their trust of human wisdom and alliances and who ignore the Lord, their only source of salvation. Isaiah calls them to return to the Lord in repentance and faith. Isaiah also continues prophesying of the Messiah to come and the blessings the Messiah will bring.

### **Searching the Scriptures**

Read **Isaiah 28** as you have time inside or outside of class. Isaiah begins by reminding his readers of the sins and coming fate of the Northern Kingdom. Then he addresses those who rule in Jerusalem and imagine that they have “a covenant with death” (**28:15**) that will protect them from

the onslaught of God's judgment. In the midst of this section of Law, Isaiah also speaks a prophecy of the Messiah to come.

1. Read **Isaiah 28:16** and **1 Peter 2:4–7**. Of what is the Messiah the cornerstone? Why do some people stumble and fall over this wonderful stone (see **Isaiah 8:14**; **John 3:18**; **1 Peter 2:8**)?

2. Read **Isaiah 29:1–14**. Just how far has Judah's refusal to listen to the Lord gone? What has happened in the people's hearts (**29:9–12**)? What is wrong with their worship (**29:13**)?

3. Read **29:15–24**. Compare **29:11–12** with **29:18–19**. What reversals will take place? What would account for such drastic changes (see **29:14**)?

4. Read **30:1–17**. Isaiah is evidently getting too personal in his preaching. What demand do the people make—loud and clear? (See **verses 10–11** and note that it has three parts.)

5. Reread **30:15**. Even though repentance is often a painful process, it also brings us peace. How?

6. Read **30:18–33**. This reading paints a beautiful picture of forgiveness and victory for God's people. Read it in light of the New Testament blessings we have received in Jesus. What does God promise in the following verses?

- **Verse 18**

- **Verse 19**

- **Verses 20–21**

- **Verses 23–24**

- **Verses 25–33**

In **Isaiah 31** the prophet again tries to convince the people of Judah of the folly of relying on Egypt instead of on the Lord. Read the chapter as you have time inside or outside of class.

7. Read **32:1–8**. Who is this king who “will reign in righteousness”? (See **2 Kings 18:1–7** and **Isaiah 36:1**.) What is the deeper, ultimate fulfillment of this prophecy? (See **Isaiah 9:6–7; 16:5; Matthew 2:1–2; Luke 23:38; Revelation 11:15**.)

8. What things will change under this King's rule?

9. Read **Isaiah 32:9–20**. Isaiah prophesies the outpouring of God’s Spirit. What specific benefits will result? (Compare **32:16–20** with **Galatians 5:22–23**.)

**Isaiah 33** exalts the Lord as the only source of salvation. Read it as you have time inside or outside of class.

## **The Word for Us**

1. Suppose Isaiah were to point his finger at you and ask whether you’ve been ignoring or conveniently overlooking God’s will, God’s wisdom, for any area of your own life. How would you answer him? Why is ignoring God’s wisdom so dangerous?

2. In **32:9–11**, Isaiah gives a specific warning to those in Judah who are complacent, to those who feel secure. What makes complacency so dangerous? What warning do you see here for yourself? Explain.

3. **Isaiah 29:22–24** outlines God’s goals for His people—the people of ancient Judah and His people of all time. How does He work toward these goals in your life? (Whom and what does He use?) To what can you point

and say—in all humility—“Look what *God* is doing in me”?

## Closing

Read or sing together the following stanzas of “God, Whose Almighty Word”:

God, whose almighty word  
Chaos and darkness heard  
And took their flight:  
Hear us, we humbly pray,  
And where the Gospel day  
Sheds not its glorious ray,  
Let there be light!

Lord, who once came to bring,  
On Your redeeming wing,  
Healing and sight,  
Health to the sick in mind,  
Sight to the inly blind:  
Oh, now to humankind  
Let there be light!

Spirit of truth and love,  
Lifegiving, holy dove,  
Speed forth Your flight;  
Move on the water's face,  
Bearing the lamp of grace,  
And in earth's darkest place  
Let there be light!

Holy and blessed Three,  
Glorious Trinity,  
Wisdom, love, might!  
Boundless as ocean's tide,  
Rolling in fullest pride,  
Through the earth, far and wide,  
Let there be light!



## **Lesson 7**

# **God's Judgment and Grace Validated in History (Isaiah 34:1-39:8)**

### **Theme Verse**

"Say to those with fearful hearts, 'Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, He will come with vengeance; with divine retribution He will come to save you' " (**Isaiah 35:4**).

### **Goal**

We seek to understand how God's judgment of the nations means vindication and salvation for His people.

### **What's Going On Here?**

God acts in history to bring judgment on sinful nations and people. God does this for the sake of His name and for the sake of His people who call upon His name. God's judgment on those who oppress His people results in vindication and salvation for believers.

### **Searching the Scriptures**

Read **Isaiah 34**. God through Isaiah pronounces judgment on the nations.

1. Reread **34:4**. Many predictive prophecies in the Old Testament refer to events soon to happen, while others refer to what will happen in the distant future. When will the destruction described in this verse occur? (See **Matthew 24:29-31**; **2 Peter 3:1-13**.)

2. The people of Edom were descendants of Esau, Jacob's (Israel's) brother (**Genesis 25:23–30; 27:38–40**). Why is Edom singled out by God for such disaster? (See **Amos 1:11; Ezekiel 35:5–6, 15**.)

3. What does God's judgment on the nations mean for God's people (**34:8**)?

4. Read **Isaiah 35**. Here Isaiah describes in picture language the effects of God's salvation. What is the main point of the portrait that Isaiah draws?

5. **Isaiah 36** tells of the Assyrian threat to Jerusalem. In **36:7** the field commander asks a question. How does his question show that he does not understand the true God or His will? (See **Deuteronomy 12:2–6; 2 Kings 18:1–4**.)

6. Why do Eliakim, Shebna, and Joah in **verse 11** ask the Assyrian field commander to speak in Aramaic?

7. Read **Isaiah 37:1–20**. What does Hezekiah's behavior when he receives the letter containing a further threat indicate?

8. Read **Isaiah 37:21–38**. In **verses 22–25** the Lord lists in poetic form the boasting of Sennacherib's feats. Why is this boasting condemned as an insult to the Lord? (See **verse 26**.)

9. What two things does the Lord cause to happen that make the promise in **37:33–35** come true? (See **Isaiah 37:36–38**.) For whose sake does God do this?

10. Read **Isaiah 38**. When informed that he will not recover from his illness, what does Hezekiah ask the Lord to remember (**38:3**)? Are you surprised at this, and if so, why? Is there a relationship between an obedient, righteous life and prayers answered? (Before answering, see **John 15:7, 16; James 5:16b; 1 John 3:21–22**.)

11. Read **Isaiah 39**. The king of Babylon's gift to Hezekiah is possibly a political maneuver. However, there is a spiritual significance in this occurrence. According to **2 Chronicles 32:31** what is it?

12. Hezekiah's action described in **Isaiah 39:2** indicates pride in his possessions. What warning about possessions does Jesus give in **Matthew 6:19–21**?

## **The Word for Us**

1. In what way is Hezekiah's action in **Isaiah 37:14–20** an example for us when problems we face seem to get worse? (Consider **Psalms 37:5–6**; **Philippians 4:6–7**.)

2. Does Hezekiah's experience of answered prayer in **Isaiah 38:5** mean that God will always answer yes to a Christian's prayer? (See **2 Corinthians 12:7–10** and **Matthew 26:39–46**.)

3. God through Isaiah condemns Sennacherib's boasting of his accomplishments (**Isaiah 37:22–29**). Read **James 4:13–17**. How ought we to regard our personal accomplishments?

## Closing

Read or sing together the following stanzas of "I Leave All Things to God's Direction":

I leave all things to God's direction,  
For He loves me in wealth or woe;  
His will is good, and His affection,  
His tender love is true, I know.  
My strength, my fortress rock is He:  
What pleases God, that pleases me.

The will of God shall be my pleasure  
While here I live life's interim;  
My will is wrong beyond all measure,  
It does not will what pleases Him.  
The Christian's motto then must be:  
What pleases God, that pleases me.

God knows what must be done to save me,  
His love for me will never cease;  
And all my sins my Lord forgave me  
With purest gold of loving grace.  
His will supreme must ever be:  
What pleases God, that pleases me.

My God desires each soul's salvation,  
My soul He too desires to save;  
Therefore with Christian resignation  
All earthly troubles I will brave.  
His will be done eternally:  
What pleases God, that pleases me.

## **Lesson 8**

# **“Comfort, Comfort My People” (Isaiah 40:1–44:23)**

### **Theme Verse**

“But now, this is what the LORD says—He who created you, O Jacob, He who formed you, O Israel: ‘Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are Mine’ ” (**Isaiah 43:1**).

### **Goal**

We seek to grow in wonder at and trust in God’s strong and beautiful promises in Christ and find comfort in them.

### **What’s Going On Here?**

Isaiah proclaims God’s comfort to His people, looking forward to the return of God’s people from captivity and even farther forward to the coming of the Servant of the Lord. Again and again, Isaiah repeats God’s assurance that His people need not be afraid for their Lord is with them, even when they walk through the fire.

### **Searching the Scriptures**

The theme of the rest of **Isaiah** is stated in **Isaiah 40:1**: comfort for God’s people. Read **Isaiah 40:1–5**. Here Isaiah looks into the near future and sees the return of God’s people from captivity, but he also looks into the more distant future.

1. Why are preparations necessary?

2. According to **Matthew 3:1–8**, who fulfills this prophecy of Isaiah? How does he call on people to prepare for the Lord's coming?

3. Read **Isaiah 40:6–8**. From where will the power come to restore God's people? From where will it not come?

4. Read **Isaiah 40:9–11**. What good tidings does the herald bring?

5. Read **Isaiah 40:12–31**. Why do God's people never need to fear or despair?

**Isaiah 41** proclaims how the Lord will be with His servant Israel and thus His people need not fear. Read it as you have time inside or outside of class.

In some sections of Isaiah, the Lord refers to Israel as His servant (for example, **41:8**), but at other times Isaiah has in view another Servant of the Lord.

6. Read **Isaiah 42:1–4**. To whom is Isaiah referring? (See **Isaiah 61:1–3**; **Luke 4:14–21**.)

7. How do the following passages show the fulfillment of the prophecy in **Isaiah 42:3**: **Mark 9:21–24**; **John 14:5–10**; **John 20:27–29**?

8. Read **Isaiah 42:5–9**. In what way is Christ a better servant than the nation of Israel was as a covenant for the people of Israel and a light to the nations? (See **Hebrews 3:2–6**; **8:6–9**.)

**Isaiah 42:10–25** encourages praise of God and reveals the blindness and deafness of Israel. Read it as you have time inside or outside of class.

9. Read **Isaiah 43:1–7**. Many people assume that God's people should escape all problems and trials. How does **43:2** indicate that God does not promise that He will remove us from all the trials and tribulations of this world? What words from this section provide comfort for those who are going through trials?



10. Read **Isaiah 43:8–13**. To what are God's people witnesses?

**Isaiah 43:14–44:23** revisits some of the themes found in the other sections we have read in this lesson. Read it as you have time inside or outside of class.

## **The Word for Us**

1. Read **Isaiah 42:10–12** and **Lamentations 3:22–23**. Why can we sing a new song to the Lord?

2. In **Isaiah 42:18–25** God complains that the people have paid no attention and did not learn from what He sent them. In what ways can we take to heart even the hard things God allows in our lives? (See **James 1:2–4**.)

## Closing

Read together the following prayer:

Lord God, You have called Your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go but only that Your hand is leading us and Your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

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## **Lesson 9**

# **The Lord Alone Is God, the Savior (Isaiah 44:24–50:11)**

### **Theme Verses**

“Who foretold this long ago, who declared it from the distant past? Was it not I, the LORD? And there is no God apart from Me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none but Me. ‘Turn to Me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other’ ” (**Isaiah 45:21–22**).

### **Goal**

We seek to understand the follies of idolatry and to put our trust in God, the only Savior.

### **What’s Going On Here?**

The Lord, through Isaiah, repeatedly declares that He alone is God and He alone is the Savior. He exposes the folly of idolatry and of relying on human wisdom and endeavors. The Lord promises the coming of His Servant, who, though mistreated, will return the people of Israel to God and bring His salvation to the ends of the earth.

### **Searching the Scriptures**

Read **Isaiah 44:24–45:7**. Isaiah again foretells the return of Judah from captivity. Not only that, about 150 years before the return takes place, Isaiah names by name the liberator of God’s people and calls him anointed. (**Ezra 1** records the fulfillment of this prophecy.)

1. For what reason will God summon Cyrus (**Isaiah 45:4**)?

2. Read **Isaiah 45:8–25**. Why does the Lord repeatedly make the point that He does in **45:14, 18, 21–22**? Who does the Lord want to acknowledge His point (**45:22**)? Who ultimately will (**45:23–25**)?

3. Read **Isaiah 46:1–13**. Bel and Nebo, gods of Babylon, are idols that must be carried around—a real chore, a burden. These gods can't even move themselves. How can they help those who seek help from them? In contrast, how is the Lord described in **46:3–13**?

4. Read **Isaiah 47:1–15**. Why does God condemn Babylon, whom He used to execute His judgment against His people?

In **Isaiah 48** God condemns the stubbornness of Israel, laments what could have been had His people paid attention to His commandments, and again announces His redemption of His people. Read it as you have time inside or outside of class.

Read **Isaiah 49:1–7**. This is the second of four Servant Songs in Isaiah (the first was in **chapter 42**). These Servant Songs speak of one who would come as a lowly servant to deliver Israel. The Servant is the Messiah, Jesus.

5. When is the Servant called (**49:1, 5**)? (See also **Luke 1:30–35**.) What will be His mission (**Isaiah 49:5–6**)? What will be the result of His ministry (**Isaiah 49:7**)?

**Isaiah 49:8–26** details more about the restoration of Israel. Read it as you have time inside or outside of class.

6. Read **50:1–11**. The third Servant Song is found in **50:4–11**. Describe the Servant's reception as He comes to fulfill His mission (**50:6**). What is the Servant's attitude toward this reception? In whom does the Servant trust (**50:7–9**)?

7. Compare **Isaiah 50:8–9** with **Romans 8:33–34**. Because of what the Servant, Jesus Christ, has done for us, of what can we be assured (**Romans 8:33–34**)?

8. Reread **Isaiah 50:10–11**. When the darkness of trouble, worry, or tragedy comes, there are two ways to respond. What are they?

## **The Word for Us**

1. Reread **Isaiah 45:9–12**. Is the thing created to question its maker? The answer seems self-evident, yet human beings question God and His purpose and working in their lives. Think about a time when you questioned God. What did you say or do? How did it all work out? If comfortable doing so, share the experience with the group.

2. Read **48:18–19**. What do people forfeit by disregarding God and His commands and promises?

3. Though we often refer to God as our heavenly Father, what picture of God is found in **49:14–16**? In what ways have you experienced God's maternal love?

4. Because our Lord Jesus was abused when He came to carry out the mission entrusted to Him by His Father (**Isaiah 50:6**), we also can expect abuse in this life because of our faith in Him. Are you experiencing any physical, emotional, or verbal abuse due to your faith? In what ways could the members of your study group help you stay strong in your faith (**1 Thessalonians 5:11**)?

## Closing

Read or sing together the following stanzas of "All Glory Be to God Alone":

Lord God, our King on heaven's throne,  
Our Father, the Almighty One.  
O Lord, the Sole-begotten One,  
Lord Jesus Christ, the Father's Son,  
True God from all eternity,  
O Lamb of God, to You we flee.

You take the whole world's sin away;  
Have mercy on us, Lord, we pray.  
You take the whole world's sin away;  
Oh, listen to the prayer we say.  
From God's right hand, oh, send today  
Your mercy on us, Lord, we pray.

You are the only Holy One,  
The Lord of all things, You alone.  
O Jesus Christ, we glorify  
You and the Spirit, Lord Most High;  
With Him You evermore will be  
One in the Father's majesty.



## **Lesson 10**

# **The Lord's Servant Stricken for Us (Isaiah 51:1–53:12)**

### **Theme Verse**

“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” (**Isaiah 53:5**).

### **Goal**

We seek to understand the intensity and extent of God's plan of salvation and be filled with a desire to spread the message of salvation.

### **What's Going On Here?**

Isaiah records the Lord's promise to send His Servant on whom He would lay the iniquity of us all. That Servant would willingly drink the cup of God's wrath for us and would emerge victorious. The will of the Lord for the salvation of the world would prosper in His hand.

### **Searching the Scriptures**

1. Read **Isaiah 51:1–16**. Who are God's people not to fear (**51:6–8, 12–13**)? Why? What instead provides a permanent foundation on which we can rely to support us in life and in death?

2. Read **51:17–23**. How is God's wrath pictured (**51:17, 22**)? Who drank the contents for us (**Luke 22:42**)?

3. Read **Isaiah 52:1–12**. The god of a defeated nation was considered weak. What would happen when the Lord would bring His people back from captivity (**Isaiah 52:5–6; Ezekiel 36:20–23**)?

4. The first part of **52:7** pictures what happens as messengers run from a battlefield to tell the folks back home about the battle's outcome. To whom do the beautiful feet talked about in **52:7** belong and what good news is proclaimed? (Compare **Isaiah 52:7** with **Romans 10:9, 14–15**.)

**Isaiah 52:13–53:12** is the fourth Servant Song in Isaiah. This passage is one of the most explicit in the Old Testament concerning the suffering and death of the Messiah (and it alludes to His resurrection as well). It is also the clearest passage in the Old Testament concerning the reason for the Messiah's death.

5. Read **52:13–53:2**. How does **52:13** predict that the work of the Lord's Servant will be successful? (See also **Revelation 5:5, 9–13**.)

6. To what does the phrase “so will He sprinkle many nations” in **Isaiah 52:15** refer? (See **1 Peter 1:1–2**; **Hebrews 9:11–28**.)

7. Read **Isaiah 53:3–9**. How can we have confidence that the Lord's Servant as described in this section of Isaiah refers to Jesus Christ? (See **Luke 22:37** and **Acts 8:26–40**.)

8. For what purpose would the Servant suffer and die? Who lays this burden on Him (see also **Isaiah 53:10**)? Who is included in the pronouns *we*, *our*, and *us* in **53:4–6** (see **Isaiah 53:8, 12**; **1 John 2:2**)?

9. The substitutionary death of Jesus in place of sinners is called vicarious atonement. Four times in **53:5** the point of vicarious atonement is made. In what way do the first two differ from the last two?

10. How do these verses show the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy: **Matthew 26:62–63**; **27:12–14, 38, 57–60**?

11. Read **Isaiah 53:10–12**. The second part of **verse 10** is a joyful answer to the question in **verse 8**. Though Jesus had no physical children, **verse 10** speaks of offspring. Who are the offspring? (See **John 1:12–13**; **Galatians 3:26**.) How does **Isaiah 53:10** indicate that these offspring will be many? (See **1 Timothy 2:3–4**.)

12. To what do the phrases “prolong His days” in **Isaiah 53:10** and “see the light of life” in **53:11** refer? (See **1 Corinthians 15:4**.)

## The Word for Us

1. Discuss opportunities you have to be people with beautiful feet, to proclaim to others the message that Jesus bore their sins. How might you more effectively take advantage of those opportunities? Never forget that the power to do this comes from God and not from yourself.

2. Reread **Isaiah 52:12**. As the people would leave Babylon, they were assured of God’s protection. Reflect on the assurances God gives you in **John 10:27–28** and **Ephesians 1:3–6, 13–14**.

3. We see the last sentence of **Isaiah 53:12** being fulfilled by Jesus as He was being crucified (**Luke 23:34**). But see also **John 17:9, 15–21**; **Romans 8:34**; **Hebrews 7:25**. What does Christ’s intercession for you mean to you?

## Closing

Read or sing together the following stanzas of "Stricken, Smitten, and Afflicted":

Stricken, smitten, and afflicted,  
See Him dying on the tree!  
This is Christ, by man rejected;  
Here, my soul, your Savior see.  
He's the long-expected prophet,  
David's son, yet David's Lord.  
Proofs I see sufficient of it:  
He's the true and faithful Word.

You who think of sin but lightly  
Nor suppose the evil great  
Here may view its nature rightly,  
Here its guilt may estimate.  
Mark the sacrifice appointed;  
See who bears the awful load;  
It's the Word, the Lord's Anointed,  
Son of Man and Son of God.

Here we have a firm foundation;  
Here the refuge of the lost;  
Christ, the rock of our salvation,  
His the name of which we boast.  
Lamb of God, for sinners wounded,  
Sacrifice to cancel guilt!  
None shall ever be confounded  
Who on Him their hope have built.

# Lesson 11

## God's Gracious Invitation (Isaiah 54:1-57:21)

### Theme Verses

"Listen, listen to Me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare. Give ear and come to Me; hear Me, that your soul may live" (**Isaiah 55:2-3**).

### Goal

We seek to respond to God's gracious invitation to come to Him and find food for our souls.

### What's Going On Here?

In these chapters, God reveals Himself as a compassionate God who delights to show mercy. After He has brought His adulterous people, portrayed here as His wife, to repentance, He will reverse her barrenness and she will have many children. God issues a gracious invitation for people to come to Him for spiritual nourishment that their souls may live. He invites them to seek Him that He may have mercy on them and freely pardon them. And this same God sends His Word to accomplish His gracious purposes.

### Searching the Scriptures

Read **Isaiah 54:1-17**. The Old Testament often uses the imagery of a marriage to portray the relationship of God (the husband) and His people (the wife).

1. Look ahead and read **Isaiah 57:3–9**. What sin does God's wife commit? (See also **Jeremiah 3:1–2, 6–9, 13**).

Because of that sin, God would judge His wife by sending her into exile. While in exile she would feel abandoned by her husband (**Isaiah 54:6**) and would experience shame, as if she were widowed (**54:4**). While prostituting herself and while in exile, she would be barren (a condition of great shame in that culture).

2. But after the exile what does God through Isaiah command Israel to do (**54:1–3**)? To what does Paul apply this passage in **Galatians 4:21–31**?

3. What comfort does God give in **Isaiah 54:6–10**? When would God's people, God's wife, be ready to receive such love? What does this passage tell us about how God prefers to deal with people?

4. What promise is given to Israel's children in **54:13**?

5. Read **Isaiah 55:1–5**. What kind of thirst do these people have and why are they thirsty, these to whom this invitation is extended? (See also **John 4:13–14; Matthew 5:6**.) Where will they find nourishment? At what price?

6. In **55:3** to what does God's everlasting covenant and faithful love promised to David refer? (See **2 Samuel 7:11b–16; Luke 1:32–33**.) What does the Lord promise about the Messiah in **Isaiah 55:4**?

7. God has extended a gracious invitation in **Isaiah 55:1–5**. What does God promise those who respond, those who turn to Him in repentance and faith? Will people have an unlimited amount of time to do this? (See **2 Corinthians 6:1–2**.)

8. Read **Isaiah 55:8–9**. The point these verses make is true in general, but in the context of **Isaiah 55**, what specifically shows that God's thoughts and ways are not our thoughts and ways?

9. Read **Isaiah 55:10–11**. These verses tell how God deals with sinners—through His Word. How does God's Word operate?



10. Read **Isaiah 55:12–13**. What would characterize the return of God's people from captivity in Babylon and looking beyond that from captivity to sin, death, and Satan? Ancient kings used to set up memorials detailing their victories. But often these were defaced by conquering kings. In figurative language, Isaiah describes the transformation of the vegetation as a victory memorial. To what will this be a memorial? Will it be destroyed?

God is about to intervene in His people's lives, bringing salvation and righteousness. **Isaiah 56:1–8** tells how His people are to live in preparation for the coming of His salvation. It also includes the good news that God welcomes foreigners who come to Him in repentance and faith.

In **56:9–12** God accuses the watchmen of Israel, who should be warning their people of spiritual danger. Instead they are consumed with their own appetites.

As you read earlier, **Isaiah 57:1–13** contains a condemnation of Israel's spiritual adultery with idols. **Isaiah 57:14–21** proclaims good news for those who are contrite. Read **Isaiah 56–57** as you have time inside or outside of class.

## **The Word for Us**

1. Reread **Isaiah 55:1–3**. Too often we spend our time, effort, and money on things that don't satisfy us spiritually. Make your own personal list of such things. Confess these to God and respond to His gracious invitation to come to Him and hear Him, to partake of the spiritual nourishment He offers as He speaks to us in His Word.

2. When we proclaim the Gospel to others and they don't immediately respond in the way we would like, we sometimes get discouraged. What encouragement can we find in **Isaiah 55:10-11**?

3. Read **Isaiah 57:10-12**, which pictures shepherds, spiritual leaders, whose only concern is for themselves and their own gain and comfort. Some pastors today may fail to speak the Law for fear they will lose support and perks. How can a Christian congregation seek to avoid such a situation? What can you do in your own congregation to prevent such a thing from happening?

## Closing

Read or sing together the following stanzas of "O Living Bread from Heaven," thinking of the spiritual nourishment your Lord offers you in His Word and in His Supper:

O living Bread from heaven,  
How well You feed Your guest!  
The gifts that You have given  
Have filled my heart with rest.  
Oh, wondrous food of blessing,  
Oh, cup that heals our woes!  
My heart, this gift possessing,  
With praises overflows.

My Lord, You here have led me  
Within Your holiest place  
And here Yourself have fed me  
With treasures of Your grace;  
For You have freely given  
What earth could never buy,  
The bread of life from heaven,  
That now I shall not die.

You gave me all I wanted;  
This food can death destroy.  
And you have freely granted  
The cup of endless joy.  
My Lord, I do not merit  
The favor You have shown,  
And all my soul and spirit  
Bow down before Your throne.

Lord, grant me then, thus strengthened  
With heav'nly food, while here  
My course on earth is lengthened,  
To serve with holy fear.  
And when you call my spirit  
To leave this world below,  
I enter, through Your merit,  
Where joys unmingled flow.

## **Lesson 12**

# **The Lord—The Light of This World and the World to Come (Isaiah 58:1–61:11)**

### **Theme Verses**

“Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises upon you. See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, 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” (Isaiah 60:1–3).

### **Goal**

We seek to come to the one who is the Light of the world for release from our sin and then for power to reflect His light as we live our lives to His glory.

### **What’s Going On Here?**

Isaiah continues to call people to repentance by describing how pitiful is their attempt at worship and how pitiful their lives have become because of sin. Isaiah describes how the Lord is appalled at the condition of His people and how He Himself intervenes to work salvation. Isaiah proclaims the glorious news that the Lord who is the light breaks forth over His people and shines through them to draw the nations to Himself. Isaiah declares the coming of one anointed by the Lord to bring release to those imprisoned in the darkness caused by sin, death, and Satan.

## Searching the Scriptures

1. Read **Isaiah 58:1–14**. According to **58:3–5** what underlying attitude of the people as they fast is displeasing to God? (See also **Matthew 6:16–18**.)

2. From **58:6–7** list the actions that God considers to be true fasting. (See also **Joel 2:13; Micah 6:8; James 1:27**.)

3. What does God promise in **58:8–9** when His people fast from the heart? (See also **Isaiah 60:1–3; Jeremiah 23:6**.)

4. Read **Isaiah 59:1–21**. Isaiah describes in graphic terms the sinful condition of the people. List three of the word pictures he uses. When people in this sinful condition don't recognize their sin, what might they mistakenly conclude (**59:1**)? What is really happening (**59:2**)?

5. How does God react to the people's predicament (**59:15b–17**)?

6. Who will be able to partake of the salvation the Lord works (59:20)? What is promised these people (59:21)?

7. **Isaiah 60:1–3** uses the same imagery as **chapters 58–59**. What darkness covers the people of the earth? Who is the light of Israel (see also **John 8:12**)? When that light shines through God's people, what will happen?

**Isaiah 60:4–22** further describes how the nations will flock to God's people, bringing gifts and serving them. In this picture of a restored people of God, Isaiah points forward to the glories of heaven. Read this section as you have time inside or outside of class.

Read **Isaiah 61:1–3** and **Luke 4:14–21**. Isaiah writes of one whom the Lord would anoint for certain tasks. In the Old Testament, kings, prophets, and priests were anointed to set them apart for God's service. The word *Messiah* means "Anointed One." Throughout the Old Testament, including **Isaiah 61**, God promises the coming of *the Anointed One*.

8. When Jesus reads this passage in the synagogue in Nazareth and applies it to Himself, why do you think He stops the quotation where He does?

9. From what bondage or captivity does Jesus release captives? (See **Matthew 23:2–4, 13–15; John 8:34–36; Hebrews 2:14–15.**)

10. Read **61:4–11**, where Isaiah describes the restoration of God's people in much the same vein as He does in **chapter 60**. Note **61:6**, where God says His people will be priests. According to **1 Peter 2:9** and **Revelation 1:5–6**, what functions do God's people perform as priests?

## **The Word for Us**

1. Reflect on these questions: In what ways does my own worship tend to be mere formalism, confined to a church building? In what ways am I growing in worship that comes from the heart and that expresses itself in actions outside of Sunday morning worship? Confess your failures to your Lord and ask for His power to reflect His light in all that you do.

2. Compare **Isaiah 59:16–17** with **Ephesians 6:10–17**. From where does our spiritual armor come? Why do we need this armor (**Ephesians 6:11–13**)?

3. Compare **Isaiah 60:11, 18–22** with **Revelation 21:22–27**. Created light, which is such a blessing in this life, will be absent in heaven. Why?

## Closing

Read or sing together the following stanzas of “The People That in Darkness Sat”:

The people that in darkness sat  
A glorious light have seen;  
The light has shined on them who long  
In shades of death have been,  
In shades of death have been.

To hail You, Sun of Righteousness,  
The gath’ring nations come;  
They joy as when the reapers bear  
Their harvest treasures home,  
Their harvest treasures home.

Lord Jesus, reign in us, we pray,  
And make us Yours alone,  
Who with the Father ever are  
And Holy Spirit, one,  
And Holy Spirit, one.



## **Lesson 13**

# **New Heavens and a New Earth (Isaiah 62:1–66:24)**

### **Theme Verses**

“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” (**Isaiah 65:17–18**).

### **Goal**

We seek to understand the consequences of rebellion against God, repent of the times when we have rebelled against Him, trust in His forgiveness, and look to Him for power to live righteously as we look forward to a life without sin in the new heavens and new earth.

### **What’s Going On Here?**

Isaiah’s proclamation of Law continues as He speaks of God trampling His enemies in judgment, confesses the sin of God’s people, notes that all of our “righteous” deeds are but filthy rags, and ends his book with a graphic description of the suffering in hell. But Isaiah also looks forward to the coming of God’s kingdom, the messianic age, which stretches into eternity. God through Isaiah proclaims that He will make righteousness and salvation shine forth from His people, that He will enable Jerusalem to give birth to her children and to nourish them with an overflowing abundance, and that He will create an enduring new heavens and new earth, characterized by joy, peace, and righteousness.

## Searching the Scriptures

1. Read **Isaiah 62:1–7**. Who is speaking in **verse 1** (see **verse 7**)? What will He not do? What does this imply about what He will do (again see **verse 7**)?

2. How will the Lord regard His transformed people (**62:4–5**)?

**Isaiah 62:8–12** continues the description of the time when God will visit His people with salvation. Read it as you have time inside or outside of class.

3. As we have seen earlier in Isaiah, the salvation of God's people is one side of a coin; the other is the defeat and judgment of their enemies and God's enemies. Read **Isaiah 63:1–6**. How is that defeat pictured?

4. Read **Isaiah 63:7–64:12**, which records a prayer consisting of praise, a recital of God's saving action in the past, confession of sin, and a plea for God to act again in salvation. The prayer opens by praising the Lord for His great deeds, especially for His kindness and compassion to His people. Why do you think it is important to begin prayer by focusing on God's attributes and praiseworthiness?

5. Compare **Isaiah 63:9a** with **Judges 10:16** and **Luke 19:41–44**. What do these verses say about our Lord's character?

6. The words of **Isaiah 63:11–14** show the activity of the Holy Spirit during Old Testament times. What work do these verses credit to this person of the Holy Trinity (see also **Numbers 11:24–30**)?

7. During a time of great rebellion and idolatry among the people of Judah, Isaiah nevertheless records this powerful prayer of intercession for the people. How is this evidence of the work of the Holy Spirit among God's people? (See **Ezekiel 22:30**.)

8. Reread **Isaiah 63:10**. What does it mean to grieve the Holy Spirit? (See also **Hebrews 10:26–31**.) Why is this so dangerous? (Note **Isaiah 63:10b**.)

9. Reread **Isaiah 64:5–7**. How sinful are we and all people? In **Romans 7:24–25** Paul asks a question similar to the one recorded in **Isaiah 64:5**. How does Paul answer that question?

**Isaiah 65:1–16** tells how God reaches out to a people who continually spurn Him and how He spares the remnant that trusts in Him but destroys the evildoers. Read this section as you have time inside or outside of class.

10. In **Isaiah 65:17–25** Isaiah paints a portrait of the future kingdom of God using images that reflect life in his day. What characterizes this kingdom of God that stretches from the coming of the Messiah into eternity?

**Isaiah 66:1–6** notes that God esteems those who are humble and contrite in spirit, and it discusses God's judgment of His enemies. Read it as you have time inside or outside of class.

11. Read **66:7–13**. Isaiah has been describing the glorious restoration of God's people, which seems like a monumental task. But God assures His people that He will indeed bring Zion to the point of delivery and enable her to give birth. How does God describe Jerusalem in **66:11–13**. How is this true of the church?

12. Read **Isaiah 66:14–24**. Isaiah ends with a look forward to the end times, again colored by the details of life in Old Testament times. What will God's final judgment mean for those who have rebelled against Him (**66:24**)? What is in store for God's people (**66:20–23**)?

## The Word for Us

1. Read **Isaiah 65:13–15**. How can what God says here be true in light of the fact that in this life the wicked often prosper and the righteous often suffer? (Compare **Psalms 73**; note especially the transition in the psalm from **verse 16** to **verse 17**.)

2. Reread **Isaiah 66:10–14**. In what ways are you comforted, delighted, caused to rejoice, and sustained by your ties with “Jerusalem,” the church?

## Closing

Read or sing together the following stanzas of “Jerusalem the Golden”:

Jerusalem the golden,  
With milk and honey blest,  
Beneath your contemplation  
Sink heart and voice oppressed.  
I know not, oh, I know not  
What joys await us there,  
What radiancy of glory,  
What bliss beyond compare.

They stand, those halls of Zion,  
Conjubilant with song  
And bright with many an angel  
And all the martyr throng.  
The prince is ever in them;  
The daylight is serene;  
The pastures of the blessed  
Are decked in glorious sheen.

There is the throne of David,  
And there, from care released,  
The shout of those who triumph,  
The song of those who feast.  
And they, who with their leader  
Have conquered in the fight,  
Forever and forever  
Are clad in robes of white.

Oh, sweet and blessed country,  
The home of God's elect!  
Oh, sweet and blessed country  
That eager hearts expect!  
In mercy, Jesus, bring us  
To that dear land of rest!  
You are, with God the Father  
And Spirit, ever blest.