

The Bible's Big Story



Isaiah 40–66

This lesson continues the study of Isaiah with chapters 40–66 address the people and situation after the exile. Chapters 40–48 announce the hope of restoration, and chapters 49–55 reveal the agent through whom it will be accomplished. This emphasis on the agent is the focal point of the whole section, as the four servant songs show. These songs are concentrated prophecies about the suffering servant through whom God will redeem and restore his people, and he is the focus of this lesson.

Review of Introductory Information

Title: The book is named for the prophet Isaiah, whose name means “Yahweh is salvation.”

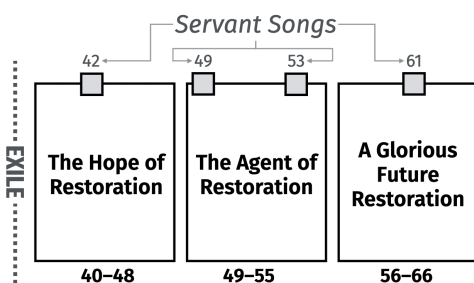
Authorship: Isaiah, the son of Amos and possibly a member of the royal court, was arguably Judah's greatest and most prolific writing prophet. Jewish tradition holds that he was martyred under Manasseh. Much modern scholarship questions his sole authorship, but those arguments are unconvincing, especially since the Spirit-inspired New Testament authors explicitly name Isaiah as the author when quoting from various portions of the book.

Date: The evidence supports dating Isaiah's ministry to about 740–680 BC, making him a contemporary of Micah, Hosea, Amos, and perhaps Jonah.

Theme & Purpose: Isaiah unfolds in three movements: Judgment and Warning (chs. 1–39), Comfort and Deliverance (chs. 40–55), and Future Glory and Restoration (chs. 56–66). The primary theme of the latter half is that God comforts his discouraged people in exile and prepares the believing remnant, and indeed all his true people, for his promised salvation.

Theme Summary: Isaiah's prophecies deliver warnings of impending judgment against Judah and the surrounding nations, interspersed with promises of redemption and restoration. That redemption will come through the promised Davidic king, a Suffering Servant who will bear the sins of many and establish God's eternal kingdom.

The Structure of Isaiah—Part 2



Redemption Revealed In Isaiah (Part 2)

Through substitutionary obedience and suffering, God's Davidic Servant redeems a people from the curse, fulfilling the law's demands and thereby establishing the new, everlasting covenant of grace.

The Servant is closely identified with Israel yet distinct from it, with a mission to redeem Israel. Isaiah 49:6 shows this, saying it is too light a thing for him merely to raise up the tribes of Jacob and bring back the preserved of Israel. The Servant represents faithful Israel while accomplishing what sinful Israel never could. He suffers as a substitute for others, as Isaiah 53:5–6 describes, being pierced for our transgressions and bearing the iniquity of us all.

The Servant's redemption extends to the nations, and its end is the renewal of all creation.

Through his substitutionary death, burial, and resurrection, the Lord Jesus Christ redeems a remnant of Israel who trust in him and extends that redemption to every tribe, nation, and tongue, to all whom the Lord calls. The Servant is therefore the hope of all humanity. In Acts 13:47, Paul and Barnabas apply Isaiah 49:6 to the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles, and Acts 13:48–49 records that as many as were appointed to eternal life believed.

Isaiah's redemptive vision climaxes in chapters 65–66, where the Messiah's restoration extends beyond Israel to the whole cosmos (65:17). Christ's work was fully accomplished on the cross, but its effects on creation are still future from our perspective. John describes the final fulfillment in Revelation 21:1–3, with the new heaven and earth and God dwelling with his people. Isaiah begins with a sinful and corrupt Jerusalem but anticipates a restored Zion marked by righteousness, peace, and God's eternal presence. His visions move from Israel's historical crisis to the cosmic renewal of creation.

Conclusion

Isaiah can be daunting, but it is full of wonder for those who seek it. The final chapters present, in a condensed form, the whole of the Bible's big story of redemption, which is why it is sometimes called the Old Testament gospel. It gives a clear account of God's plan to redeem a people from every nation and restore the fallen creation through his faithful servant, the Lord Jesus Christ. Believers, with the rest of creation, long for the culmination of that redemption at the second coming.

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1. Isaiah 40-48 grounds Israel's comfort in God's greatness, mercy, and faithfulness rather than in their circumstances. Where are you tempted to find comfort in your situation or ability instead, and how does this section redirect you?
2. The servant is called Israel in 49:3 yet is distinguished from Israel in 49:5-6. How would you explain to someone what it means that Jesus, the messianic servant, is identified as Israel?
3. The servant suffers judgment, yet he succeeded where Israel failed. How does Isaiah 53:6-11 help you answer the question, "Judgment for what?"
4. Isaiah 49:6; 65:17-19 and Revelation 21:1-3 show redemption reaching the nations and renewing creation. How does knowing that the effects of Christ's work on creation are still future shape the way you wait for the second coming?