Introduction

Isaiah

The Book of the Servant

The word of the LORD came to the prophet Isaiah during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah from 740-700 BC (Isaiah 1:1).

Isaiah's commission started in the year King Uzziah died (Isaiah 6:1,8).

The prophecy or vision of Isaiah is vast and covers many ideas and theological themes. It is useful to break it up into more manageable and logical portions. The simplest and most useful breakdown is to identify three main sections, namely:

- The Book of the King Isaiah 1 to 37
- The Book of the Servant Isaiah 38 to 55
- The Book of the Conqueror Isaiah 56 to 66

(Motyer, 2016, p.5-6)

The Book of the Servant is a glorious prophecy offering great hope to the people of God, holding out in a wicked world. In the Book of the Servant, the following themes are covered.

1. Comfort. A word of comfort against the backdrop of the future Babylonian invasions, the deportations into exile (605 BC and 597 BC) and the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple (586 BC).

2. Good tidings or good news. Good news in Hebrew is *basar* (בָּשַׂר), meaning *to bear tidings.* Good news or glad tidings is found in: Isaiah 40:9 (twice); 41:27; 52:7 (twice). In Isaiah 52:7, it is called good news and good tidings alternatively. The LXX translates to bring or announce good news, or gospel as *euangelizo* (εὐαγγελίζω). In the New Testament this good news is called the gospel, from *euangellion.*

3. The uniqueness of the LORD. The claim by the LORD that he alone is God, with the phrase 'there is no other' is stated seven times in Isaiah 38-55, of which five occurrences are found in Isaiah 45 alone. They are found in: Isaiah 44:8; Isaiah 45:5, 6, 14, 18, 22; and Isaiah 46:9.

4. The futility of idols and idolatry. Idolatry was plaguing the Southern Kingdom and Isaiah addresses the problem throughout the book of the Servant.

Idols: Isaiah 40:19-20; Isaiah 41:7; Isaiah 44:10, 12, 15, 17.
Idolatry: Isaiah 41:22; Isaiah 42:8, 17; Isaiah 44:9; Isaiah 45:16, 20; Isaiah 46:1 and Isaiah 48:5, 14.
Idolatry, in essence, was not trusting the LORD's ability to deal with the problems of his people, i.e. faithlessness, and displacing the LORD with other gods. Idolatry was the main reason that they ended up in Babylon.

5. 'I am He', Hebrew *ani hu* (אֲנִי־הוּא). In Greek this is translated as *ego eimi* (ἐγώ εἰμι). These are called the non-predicated 'I am He' statements, only used by YAHWEH in the Old Testament, which means they have no clear object or predicate.
YAHWEH does not need to compare himself in terms of any other description, than simply and profoundly stating 'I am He'. There are seven of these statements in Isaiah 38-55. They are found in: Isaiah 41:4; Isaiah 43:10, 13, 25, Isaiah 46:4; Isaiah 48:12. Isaiah 51:12

6. The songs of the Servant. There are four aptly named Servant songs to be found in Isaiah 38-55. They occur in Isaiah 42:1-4; Isaiah 49:1-7, Isaiah 50:4-9; and Isaiah 52:13-53:12. The Servant songs describe the work and identity of the Servant of YAHWEH. They answer the following questions: Who was he? What was his relationship to YAHWEH? What was his mission? What did he accomplish? Which part of his work is still outstanding?

7. Substitutionary atonement. This is one of the great themes of Isaiah 38-55. Where the Servant of the LORD offers himself as a ransom for his people to redeem them. He becomes a penal substitution for the sins of his people and thereby achieves their redemption and justification.

8. Accomplished redemption. This is described in Isaiah 38-55 in the work of the Suffering Servant. Salvation is accomplished, but not yet completed. There is still a future aspect to develop.

9. Zion. There is an earthly city called Jerusalem in Judah, which fails to live up to YAHWEH's ideal for Zion. Then there is Zion, YAHWEH's eternal city, which is described throughout the prophecy of Isaiah. This is a place of holiness, justice and righteousness. Citizenship is gained not by nationality, but through penal substitution and redemption. These are the entry and citizenship requirements to become part of Zion.

10. Babylon. There is a rival city to Zion or Jerusalem called Babylon, which signifies the place of all rebellion, even from ancient times.

The Jews would physically become exiles in this city for 70 years, according to the prophet Jeremiah. However, there is also a spiritual Babylon, the city of rebellion and opposition to YAHWEH's rule. The spiritual exile of the Jews had to be ended as well, and they had to be delivered from this Babylon. Daniel is informed that this would take 70 times 7, or 490 years (Daniel 9:24-26).

11. The Mission of Zion's Children. Their mission is to declare the good news of Zion and its Redeemer, and be an attraction among the nations, so that the very best and finest would become citizens of Zion.

These are some of the major themes in the Book of the Servant.

Study 1

Isaiah

Hezekiah's Faith Strengthened

Introduction

The Book of the Servant begins with Hezekiah's illness. This event provides the backdrop for the transition between the time of the Assyrian threat from 740 BC to 722 BC, when the Northern Kingdom fell, and the ongoing threat to the Southern Kingdom of Judah, reaching its peak in the siege of Jerusalem in 701 BC (Isaiah 1:7-9).

Assyrian power wanes until 612 BC with the fall of Nineveh, and the rise and transition to the Babylonian threat, culminating in the deportations into exile in 605 BC and 597 BC. Eventually, the city of Jerusalem is besieged, and the temple destroyed in 586 BC.

At the time of the Assyrian siege, Hezekiah became terminally ill, and the LORD sent Isaiah to inform him of his imminent death. Hezekiah pleaded for his life, and the LORD determined to spare him for another 15 years.

This section can be divided according to the following themes:

Hezekiah's Illness	38:1-8
Hezekiah's Psalm	38:9-20
Hezekiah's Healing	38:21-22

Study Questions

Note: Answer questions from the text.

Read Isaiah 38:1-22

1. Which were 'those days' the prophet is referring to? 38:1, 6

2. What was the devastating news Hezekiah received? 38:1

3. What was Hezekiah's response? What was the gist of Hezekiah's prayer? Was it long and complicated? 38:2-3

4. Did Hezekiah actually always walk faithfully, with wholehearted devotion and doing what was good in God's eyes as he claimed? 38:3

5. Did the LORD hear Hezekiah's prayer? How did the LORD answer Hezekiah's prayer? What did the LORD promise? 38:4-5

6. Apart from healing, what else did the LORD promise Hezekiah? What would the LORD do for Jerusalem regarding Assyria? 38:6

7. Which sign would the LORD give to Hezekiah regarding his promises? How was this possible? 38:7-8

The Stairway of Ahaz

It was likely a type of sundial or a series of steps used to measure time by the position of the sun's shadow. It was constructed by Hezekiah's father, King Ahaz, the previous ruler of Judah. The effect of the sun on the dial was probably confined to the land of Judah, rather than globally. This is borne out by the inquiry by Babylonian ambassadors, recorded in the book of Chronicles.

2 Chronicles 32:31 But when envoys were sent by the rulers of Babylon to ask him about the miraculous sign that had occurred in the land, God left him to test him and to know everything that was in his heart.

8. What would be the symbolic significance of this event? 38:7-8 cf. Joshua 10:12-14

Hezekiah's Psalm

In Isaiah 38:9-20, we find a psalm of lament and praise by Hezekiah, as he reflects on his illness, imminent death, recovery and the subsequent destruction of the Assyrian army.

9. What does Hezekiah's psalm illustrate to us when we face severe trials in life? What was Hezekiah's plea? 38:9-10

10. Why are the words the LORD, the LORD, repeated in 38:11?

11. What kind of prayer is 38:12-15?

12. Did the LORD give Hezekiah relief? 38:16

13. What did Hezekiah realise was the purpose of his suffering and trial? 38:17

14. Did Hezekiah believe in life after death? Did Hezekiah not believe that the dead are unable to praise YAHWEH? 38:18-19

15. What would Hezekiah do for the rest of his life, after he had received healing? 38:20

16. What was this remedy, and what could it have been? 38:21-22

17. Does 38:21-22 fit here at the end, or should these verses perhaps have been placed between Isaiah 38:6 and 7?

Reflection & Application _____

1. Does the going back of the sun's shadow by ten steps perhaps show us anything regarding Christ? Joshua 10:12-14

2. Does the LORD always deliver us from our troubles in the way that we hope?

3. Is there perhaps a pattern for immense suffering and grief that one can discern and follow?

…… 38:10
…… 38:11
…… 38:12
…… 38:13
…… 38:14
…… 38:14
…… 38:15
…… 38:16
…… 38:17
…… 38:18
…… 38:19
…… 38:20

Study 2

Isaiah

Hezekiah's Faith Falters

Introduction

After Hezekiah was healed of his terminal illness by the LORD, some envoys from Babylon suddenly appeared to enquire after his health. Why did they come when they heard of Hezekiah's return to health and the sun going back ten steps on the dial of Ahaz?

2 Chronicles 32:31 But when envoys were sent by the rulers of Babylon to ask him about the miraculous sign that had occurred in the land, God left him to test him and to know everything that was in his heart.

How did they know about these events? When one considers the events around the Assyrian threat to Judah, and the sudden appearance of the Babylonians under the leadership of Merodach Baladan, the leader of the Babylonians, well more than 100 years before they became an Empire, we must conclude that Hezekiah had dealings with them to avert the Assyrian threat.

This explains Isaiah's rebuke of Hezekiah's actions, considering the history of his father Ahaz's unbelief (Isaiah 7:3-4). When Ahaz faced a lesser threat from Ephraim (the Northern Kingdom) and Aram, he demonstrated his lack of faith by subjecting himself to Tiglath-Pileser as a vassal (2 Kings 16:7-8). This was after the LORD had promised through Isaiah and said, "Be careful, keep calm and don't be afraid. Do not lose heart because of these two smouldering stubs of firewood" (Isaiah 7:4). Ahaz did not listen, and in time the Assyrians became a threat and a scourge to Judah.

Despite the LORD's assurance that Assyria would not prevail against Judah (Isaiah 37:5-7), just as the LORD had promised his father many years before, Hezekiah still made contact with the Babylonians. Hezekiah was doing the same as his wicked father by trusting in Babylon to deliver him from Assyria, and likewise received the prophet's condemnation, just as his evil father before him. Hezekiah's big failure was not only his pride but also his trust in the Babylonians to deliver him from the Assyrian threat.

Study Questions _____

Note: Answer questions from the text.

Read Isaiah 39:1-8

1. Did the LORD deliver on his promise of healing and deliverance? 37:5-7; 39:1

2. When are believers at their most vulnerable to spiritual folly? 39:1-2 cf. 2 Chronicles 32:31

3. Why did Isaiah ask these questions: "What did those men say, and where did they come from?" 39:3-4

4. Do our sins impact our descendants and our legacy? 39:5-7

5. Who could some of Hezekiah's descendants have been who possibly became eunuchs in Babylon? 39:7 cf. Daniel 1:6-7

7. Why was Hezekiah's sin by forming an alliance with the Babylonians especially heinous? Isaiah 7:3-4; 9-12; 2 Kings 16:7-8

Reflection & Application _____

1. Do our sins impact those who come after us, such as our family members? 39:6-7

2. Consider the double danger of having a clear example of YAHWEH's dealings with your close ancestor, and then committing the same sin that your ancestor was guilty of. Daniel 5:18-23

Study 3

Isaiah

Three Voices of Consolation

Introduction

Hezekiah should have placed his trust in the LORD, as He was the one who would deliver him. Although Hezekiah was a godly king, he failed miserably in this regard. We may miss this, but in his political manoeuvring, Hezekiah acted just like his evil predecessor Ahaz, who trusted in Assyria (2 Kings 16:7-8), rather than the assurance of God's word through Isaiah that he would protect the kingdom (Isaiah 7:4).

The increasing rebellion and wickedness of the kings and people of Judah would eventually lead to their exile in Babylon. Whether they were as evil as Ahaz, or as godly as Hezekiah, they failed in this one area of trust.

Against this prophecy of the future exile and humiliation, the LORD brings a message of comfort and consolation (40:1-2). The time will come when the LORD will comfort his people once again. This consolation will be enough to fulfil all God's promises of restoration.

The LORD provides this message of consolation through three voices that announce the following:

The Glory of the LORD	40:3-5
The Word of the LORD	40:6-8
The Arm of the LORD	40:9-11

Study Questions

Note: Answer questions from the text.

Read Isaiah 40:1-11

We read the opening lines of this passage:

1. "Comfort, comfort my people, says your God." Why is comfort mentioned twice? 40:1 What preceded these words of consolation? 39:6-7

2. What does *hard service* sound like? What kind of hard service could this be? 40:2

The End of the Exile

Many years later, Daniel, as an exile in Babylon, received the following answer regarding the end of the exile. The physical exile would end after 70 years, as Jeremiah had prophesied. However, the greatest exile of the Jews was spiritual, not physical. Not in an earthly city called Babylon, but in a spiritual city by the same name, the city of rebellion. Their enslavement was not to a human master, but slavery to sin and death. Their spiritual exile and slavery would last 70 times 7 years (Daniel 9:24-26).

Three Voices

The promise of comfort or consolation from their exile and slavery to sin has truly ended and came to Israel by means of three voices. How would they know that the exile has ended?

The First Voice

3. What was the message of the first voice? For whom does preparation have to be made? 40:3-4

4. What is the significance of a road in the wilderness? What past event in Israel's history does this remind you of? 40:3-4

A Triumphal Procession

Another possible option is that of a triumphal procession (Isaiah 60:11), which is exaltation language, as the road or highway in the wilderness has to be prepared for the coming of a conquering King.

5. How does Isaiah describe this arrival of a conquering king? What phrase does he use? 60:11

6. According to Isaiah, who is this road-building exercise for? 40:5

7. Of what does the presence of the glory of the LORD in the wilderness remind you?

8. What will be different this time? 40:5

9. What is the meaning of this road in the wilderness, and the revealed Glory of the LORD?

10. Who is the one coming, the one called the Glory of the LORD? 40:5

The Second Voice

11. What does the second voice tell Isaiah to cry out? "What shall I cry?" 40:6

Note: Isaiah 40:6b sounds very much like **Psalm 103:15-16.**

Psalm 103:13 As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him; [14] for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust. [15] As for man, his days are like grass, he flourishes like a flower of the field; [16] the wind blows over it and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more. [17] But from everlasting to everlasting the LORD's love is with those who fear him, and his righteousness with their children's children--

12. The second voice contrasts two things very clearly. What are they? What is the meaning of this passage? 40:6-8

13. What is the one thing you need to remember? The most important thing of all? 40:8

The Word of God / The Promises of YAHWEH

The Word of God is for our benefit. Specifically, it refers to the promises of God. All the promises that God has spoken. None of these great promises shall fail.

14. Can you think of some of the promises of the LORD? 40:8; 2 Corinthians 1:20

    ……

    ……

    ……

    ……

    ……

The Third Voice

15. What is the message of the third voice? What is the content of the good tidings? What is another term for good tidings? 40:9

16. There is a third voice. What does the third voice cry out? 40:9d-10

17. To whom is the message directed? Is Zion and Jerusalem equivalent? 40:9

18. What is the Good News? 40:10

19. In what manner will the Sovereign LORD come? Who or what is the arm of the LORD? What will the arm of the LORD do for him? 40:10

The Arm of the LORD

Your arm indicates your strength. So, the Arm of the LORD is his power and strength. That is his instrument of waging war. The arm of the LORD is just another way the OT refers to the Messiah. As it is a Person, therefore **'Arm'** should have a capital letter.

20. What is the reward of the Arm of the LORD? 40:11

21. How does he feel towards his reward, his people? What is he like? 40:11

Reflection & Application _____

1. Who fulfilled the words of Isaiah 40:1-11 in history? Who is the first voice, and who is the glory of the LORD? Mark 1:3-4, 14

2. This leads us to the fulfilment. How are the messages as shouted by these three voices, fulfilled? What is the good news Isaiah refers to? 40:9

3. Has this gospel fulfilment already happened in history, or are we looking at a future event? Matthew 3:3; Mark 1:1-3; Luke 3:4-5; John 1:23

Mark 1:1 The beginning of **the gospel** about Jesus Christ, the Son of God. [2] It is written in Isaiah the prophet: "I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way"-- [3] "a voice of one calling in the desert, `Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'"

The gospel (or the good news, as Isaiah calls it), is about a person called Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

4. How does the testimony of the NT writers concur with the three voices of Isaiah 40:1-11? John 1:14, 2 Corinthians 1:20; John 12:38

   John 1:14 ……40:5

   2 Corinthians 1:20 ……40:8

   John 12:38 ……40:10

And so Jesus came, and he says, the good news is this: “I have come to fulfil the good news of Isaiah!”

Mark 1:14 After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming **the good news** of God. [15] "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"

5. How does 1 Peter 1:23-25 fulfil the words of Isaiah? 40:6-8

Study 4

Isaiah

YAHWEH, the Incomparable One

Introduction

How do believers handle adverse circumstances? At the time of this prophecy, Israel (the Northern Kingdom) and Judah (the Southern Kingdom) were living under the Assyrian scourge. Israel had been invaded since 740 BC by successive Assyrian rulers, who finally conquered the Northern Kingdom and deported many Israelites in 722 BC. The Assyrian armies went on to destroy all of Judah and came right up to the walls of Jerusalem (701 BC).

Those were difficult days, and God seemed far away. Isaiah prophesied the word of the LORD to the Southern Kingdom, consisting of Judah and Benjamin.

Isaiah 1:6 From the sole of your foot to the top of your head there is no soundness-- only wounds and welts and open sores, not cleansed or bandaged or soothed with oil. [7] Your country is desolate, your cities burned with fire; your fields are being stripped by foreigners right before you, laid waste as when overthrown by strangers. [8] The Daughter of Zion is left like a shelter in a vineyard, like a hut in a field of melons, like a city under siege.

How do we, as Christian believers, handle similar pressures of life today? And what do we as believers need to understand?

People in general trust in what their own hands have made. However, as believers, do we trust in the God of Scripture, or do we turn to idols? Before you say, “Yes, I do trust in God, and no, I will not turn to idols”, consider the following:

1. What is God like? 40:12-17
2. What are idols? 40:18-20
3. Hear and understand! 40:21-26
4. Trust in the LORD. 40:27-31

Study Questions

Note: Answer questions from the text.

Read Isaiah 40:12-31

1. What is the most important thing when we face troubling times? 40:12-17

Five Questions

Isaiah provides us with five questions, which are meant to be observations regarding the One True God.

2. What is the answer to the first two questions in 40:12?

The argument from creation is what is known as the *teleological argument* for the existence of God.

3. What is the answer to the next three questions in 40:13-14?
   cf. Romans 11:34

The Name of the LORD

God's Name is 'the LORD' or YAHWEH. Is there anyone who can **understand** God's mind? Paul quoted this passage when he considered the wisdom of God in his plan of salvation, as quoted in Romans 11:34. Does YAHWEH have to consult anyone? Does the mind or Spirit of the LORD need help? (Genesis 1:2) We are all taught throughout life. Who has taught God?

4. What is Isaiah's conclusion? 40:15, 17

5. What can we offer YAHWEH? 40:16

6. What are idols like when compared to YAHWEH? 40:18-20

Idolatry

Our gods are as good as we have the ability to make them!
The quality of our idols depends on the financial status of the devotee.
Alec Motyer

Can you see the irony? How do the idols compare with God? God made everything. He is the Creator, but man makes the idols. Then he worships them as if they are God. However, the idol is designed not to move, not even to fall! They are nailed down so that they do not topple over (41:7).

Alec Motyer adds the following valuable insight:

An idol is a product of human skill and human fear.
An idol is part of people's defensive arrangement in life.

7. Which examples of idols can you think of?

8. What is the difference between the idols of the rich and the poor? 40:19-20

9. What is an idol worshipper in essence, according to the four questions in 40:21?

10. What is YAHWEH's relation to the created order, idols included? 40:22

11. Who is sovereign over all political circumstances? 40:23-24

12. To whom will we compare YAHWEH? 40:25 cf. 40:18

13. What is the greatest witness of the LORD's presence? 40:26

14. Do you believe your circumstances and trials are hidden from the LORD? 40:27

15. What will the LORD do for those who trust in him and not in idols? 40:29-31

16. To whom is this offer? 40:31

Reflection & Application _____

1. What is the lesson here? 40:26

2. If this is so, is there a reason to fear? Mark 4:40

3. What is the first solution to the fear of circumstances? 40:28

4. What are some of the things that can be or become idols in your own life?

Study 5

Isaiah

God, His People and the Nations

Introduction

The people of Israel would face a desperate situation with the future Babylonian invasion and subsequent exile. Under Nebuchadnezzar, two deportations took place in 605 and 597 BC. After a one-and-a-half-year siege of Jerusalem (2 Kings 25:1-3) starting in 588 BC, the Babylonians would break through the walls and destroy the city and the temple in 586 BC.

Still, the LORD was able to save them from all their troubles. Just as the LORD saved them from the Assyrians, he was able to save them from the coming Babylonian threat as well.

However, there is a problem. Their sins and iniquities separate them from God. There is no one righteous or just. They are quick to rush into wickedness and invent new ways of doing evil.

Study Questions

Note: Answer questions from the text.

Read Isaiah 41:1-20

1. What was the universal offer? How do we know it is universal? 41:1

2. Who is in sovereign control of world powers? 41:2-3

3. What was the name of this conqueror from the east? Isaiah 44:28; 45:1

4. Who is in total control of human history? 41:4a

5. What does 'I, the LORD, am the first, and with the last of them' mean? 41:4b

6. What does the LORD mean by stating, 'I am He'? 41:4c; Deuteronomy 32:39

The Non-Predicated *I am He* Sayings

In grammar, an object is used to describe or give meaning to a subject, separated by a verb. For example, a man would qualify who he is by adding: "I am an engineer, a father, a soccer player," etc. On the other hand, YAHWEH alone does not need to describe himself in terms of something else. He simply states, "I am He." He is the eternal, self-existing One. The first such non-predicated self-declaration is found in Deuteronomy 32:39.

"See now that **I** myself **am He**! There is no god besides me.

Literally translated: I am, I am He, in Hebrew, *ani ani hu* (אֲנִי אֲנִי הוּא).

There are seven non-predicated 'I am He' statements in the book of the Servant. The first one is found in Isaiah 41:4

I am He, in Hebrew, *ani hu* (אֲנִי־הוּא).

The 'I am He' Statements

Isaiah 41:4 "Who has done this and carried it through, calling forth the generations from the beginning? I, the LORD--with the first of them and with the last--**I am he**."

7. How do the nations respond to the approach of the coming conqueror? 41:5-7

8. Where do the nations turn for help? 41:7

Idolatry

We too often do the same. When difficulties arise, whether in sickness, war, famine, divorce, or failure. We cling to our idols. But this is what the heathen nations do!

9. What are the 'I am He', the eternal, self-existing One's words of comfort to Israel? 41:8-9

10. How should Israel respond to this declaration of YAHWEH? 41:10

11. What will happen to the enemies of Israel? 41:11-12

12. Why can they be certain of these comforting words? 40:13

13. Do they have any strength in and of themselves? 41:14

14. What will the LORD do for them and with them? 41:15-16

15. Who are the *poor* and *needy*, and what is YAHWEH's promise to them? 41:17

16. What will YAHWEH do in the desert? What message does this image convey? 41:18-19

17. When the LORD does this, what will the nations know? 41:20

Reflection & Application _____

1. What do you think is the significance of the non-predicated *I am He* statements in the book of the Servant? (Isaiah 38-55)

2. What did Jesus convey by his own non-predicated *I am He* statements in John 8:24 and 8:28?

   John 8:24 …….

   John 8:28 …….

   I am He in Greek is *ego eimi* (ἐγώ εἰμι). John 8:24, 28

Study 6

Isaiah

The Plight of the Nations

Introduction

In Isaiah 40:12-31, we noted what YAHWEH was like, compared to the idols of the nations. The command to the people of Israel was to trust in the LORD for salvation. But how about the rest of the world? In whom will they place their trust? How will they be saved?

The answer is given in Isaiah 41:21-29 and 42:1-9

In the near future, a great conqueror would arise from the East, from the land of Persia. He would conquer the known world. Not only would he destroy the Babylonians, but he would also tread down many other nations, and no one would be able to stand up to him.

What could the idols in whom the nations put their trust, really do? If they could not even tell the future, how would they be able to save the nations? Let us see how YAHWEH describes the idols and how they are exposed.

What follows is a court scene where the idols are put on trial before the LORD, and their ability is compared to that of YAHWEH's own deliverer, whom he will send, called the Servant of the LORD. The word 'see' or 'behold' is used to highlight the ability of the idols, and then compare them to the ability of the LORD's Deliverer or Servant.

YAHWEH describes the idols in the following manner:

NAS **Isaiah 41:24** "Behold, you are of no account…"

The ability of the idols is described:

NAS **Isaiah 41:29** "Behold, all of them are false…"

Study Questions

Note: Answer questions from the text.

Read Isaiah 41:21-29

1. Who is the LORD challenging to set forth their case through arguments? Who is the pronoun ‘your’ referring to? 41:21

2. What does YAHWEH mean by “Present your case” and “Set forth your arguments”? 41:21a

3. Why does YAHWEH present himself as Jacob’s King? 41:21b

4. Which two things are the idols totally unable to do? 41:22-23

5. What is the challenge to the idols to show that they are alive? 41:23b cf. 44:16-20

6. How does the LORD expose the uselessness of idols? 41:24a

7. What is the verdict on the one who trusts in idols? 41:24b

8. By what example does YAHWEH show their utter inability? 41:25

9. How will the world find out about the conqueror from the east? 41:26

10. Why did the LORD tell them so far ahead of time? 41:27a

11. Will the coming of the conqueror be good news or bad news for God's people? 41:27b

12. Was there any prediction from the idols of his coming? Is there anyone who is able to answer the LORD? 41:28

13. What is the verdict on the idols? Notice the word "behold" again to draw attention to their worthlessness and to close the argument. 41:29

Reflection & Application _____

Can you think of personal examples of idols which have lost their influence over you?

Study 7

Isaiah

The LORD's Servant

Servant Song 1

Introduction

Does YAHWEH have an answer to the world's problems? The LORD announced that in the near future, a great conqueror would rise from the East, from the land of Persia. Not only would he destroy the Babylonians, but other nations would not be able to stand before him, and he would establish a world empire.

When the nations hear about this conqueror, they will react in fear and consult their idols. But what can the idols really do? If they could not even foretell the coming of this conqueror, how would they be able to save the nations who trust in them?

If idols cannot help, will the LORD provide an answer to the world's problems? What would be the LORD's answer? Someone he calls his Servant! The LORD will raise up someone called his Servant and commission him to bring deliverance to the world. The answer is given in 42:1-9.

The LORD contrasts the idols with his own deliverer, the Servant. The word 'see' or 'behold', or *hen* (הֵן) in Hebrew, is used again to bracket the ability of the idols, as well of the Servant. YAHWEH describes the work and ability of the Servant, in contrast with the idols. This word is omitted in 41:24 and 42:1 of the NIV, but is clearly stated in the NAS.

Idols	**The Servant**
41:24 "Behold, you are of no account"	**42:1** "Behold, My Servant"
The ability of the idols is described	The ability of the Servant
41:29 "Behold, all of them are false"	**42:9** "Behold, the former things"

The Servant of the LORD.

1. Describing the Servant's Task.	42:1-4
2. Confirming the Servant's Task.	42:5-7
3. Recognising the Servant.	42:8-9

Study Questions

Note: Answer questions from the text.

Read Isaiah 42:1-9

1. Who was called the Servant of the LORD under the Old Covenant? Joshua 1:1, 2, 7, 13, 15; Joshua 22:2, 4, 5; Deuteronomy 34:5.

2. What does the LORD promise for the future? 42:1

3. How does YAHWEH describe his relationship to the new Servant of the LORD? 42:1

4. How has the LORD endowed the Servant for his task of deliverance? 42:1b

5. What is the good news regarding the justice of the judgment of the Servant? 42:1c,3-4

Judgement or Justice

Notice the word justice in 42:1 and 42:4.
The Hebrew word is *mishpat,* and *krisis* is the Greek word in the LXX.

- *Mishpat* (מִשְׁפָּט) meaning *judgment.*
- *Krisis* (κρίσις) meaning *judging, judgment*

6. Will the Servant be a revolutionary? 42:2

7. Apart from bringing justice, what will the Servant come to do? What will he be like? 42:3

8. Will the Servant lose heart or sin like Moses, before his task is accomplished? 42:4a

9. What will the Servant offer, in which the coastlands may place their hope? 42:4b

10. How will we know that the Servant is the LORD's agent? 42:5, 8

11. Why is the LORD's endorsement of the Servant so important? 42:5

The Ultimate Guarantee

The endorsement does not come from some idol, some guru or political analyst. No, God the LORD (יַהְוֶה אֵל) endorses him.
The Creator of the heavens and the earth!
The LORD who breathed life into the peoples of the earth. The one who gives life to all who walk on the earth.

12. What is the specific work of the Servant? What does the offer of sight, hearing and understanding convey? 42:6-7

13. Who will accompany and keep the Servant throughout his mission? 42:6

14. What is the Servant's double commission? 42:6

15. Can the promise of healing, freedom and deliverance be understood as liberation theology or faith healing? 42:7

16. What will the LORD not share with anyone else? 42:8

17. The LORD ends his statement with the word 'see' or 'behold'. How would we know this is from the LORD? 42:9

Reflection & Application _____

Who is the Servant of the LORD? How will we recognise him when the time comes? Matthew 12:18-21

Note: The Liberation of Israel in the Old and the New Exodus:

Egypt	**Babylon**
Bondage	Exile
Physical Liberation Moses	Physical Liberation Cyrus
Spiritual Liberation the Arm of the LORD Exodus 6:6 the Angel of His Presence Exodus 23:20-23 Isaiah 63:9	Spiritual Liberation the Arm of the LORD Isaiah 51:9; 52:10; 53:1 the Servant Isaiah 52:13; 53:11

Study 8

Isaiah

The Song of Praise

Introduction

In response to the work of the Servant, the world will sing in praise. What will be the reason for the song? The nations of the world will realise the uselessness of their idols, and they will love the Servant's instruction (42:4). The uselessness of idols has already been exposed in 41:21-29, when the word 'see' or 'behold' shows them up for what they are:

The Idols

41:24 "Behold, you are of no account…"

The utter inability of the idols 41:21-29

41:29 "Behold, all of them are false…"

The peoples of the world will realise the LORD's answer for their deliverance is the Servant, whose ability to deliver is described in 42:1-4, once again bracketed by the word 'see' or 'behold'.

The Servant

42:1 "Behold, My Servant…"

The ability of the Servant 42:1-4, 6-7

42:9 "Behold, the former things…"

When the world realises that the Servant's establishment of justice is benign and his teaching is wonderful, that he will set the captives free, open eyes that are blind (42:2-4), they cannot stay silent but have to break forth in praise.

Study Questions

Note: Answer questions from the text.

Read Isaiah 42:10-17

1. Which parts of the earth will sing? 42:10; Psalm 100:1

2. What kind of song do they sing? 42:11

3. What should the nations render to the LORD? How are the praise of the nations and the glory of God connected? 42:12 cf. Psalm 37:4

4. What will be the ground or basis of their song? Is there a time when the delivered ones must sing? 42:13 cf. Revelation 15:2-4 cf. Exodus 15:1-18

5. How does the LORD express his victory? Who is speaking here? What is conveyed by the image of giving birth? 42:14

6. What will YAHWEH do to the wicked when the time is ripe? 42:15 cf. Malachi 4:1-3

7. Will there be bad news for the righteous? 42:16 cf. Malachi 4:1-3

8. What will happen to the wicked? 42:17

Reflection & Application _____

1. Can a believer experience deliverance and not sing? Can a believer experience deliverance and be quiet? Is there such a thing as a secret Christian?

2. How does the text of Isaiah 42:14 compare with Romans 8:22?

Study 9

Isaiah

Redemption from Earthly Captivity

Introduction

The Servant of the LORD is the only one who will deliver the captives from spiritual exile. The LORD will hold his hand. The Spirit will accompany him, and he will bring forth justice, establish his teaching, open blind eyes and set the captives free.

However, in contrast to the Servant of the LORD (42:1-9), there is another servant. A servant of the LORD who has failed in his task. The deaf and blind servant: the people of Israel. This is the servant who will end up in the Babylonian exile. It will be necessary to set them free from physical exile. The one who will be able to set them free from their earthly captivity will be the deliverer from the east.

The deliverer is named in Isaiah 44:28 and Isaiah 45:1 and 45:13 as Cyrus. We know from history that he conquered Babylon in 539 BC. A year later, he allowed the Jews to return home and permitted them to rebuild the Temple.

Study Questions

Note: Answer questions from the text.

Read Isaiah 42:18-25

1. Is the deaf and blind servant of the LORD the same Servant of the LORD as in 42:1-4? Or is it someone else? 42:18-20

2. Does this servant listen to the God of the covenant? 42:20.

3. What glorious thing did the LORD give to his servant for his own sake? 42:21

4. What was happening to this blind and deaf servant instead? 42:22

5. Who was this blind and deaf servant? 42:24

6. What was the physical as well as spiritual condition of the people of Israel? 42:22 cf. 42:7

7. How alone could they be rescued from this condition and predicament? 42:23 cf. 42:7

8. Who handed them over in the first place? 42:24a

9. Why did they end up in this predicament? 42:24b

10. Did the people of Israel understand their predicament and their punishment and change their behaviour? 42:25

11. What did their physical circumstances indicate? 42:24-25 cf. 6:9-12

Reflection & Application _____

1. Do rebellious and wicked people often understand why they are in the predicament in the first place? Revelation 9:5, 10

2. When circumstances are terrible because of rebellion and God's judgment, do sinners repent? Revelation 9:20-21

Study 10

Isaiah

The Certainty of Redemption

Introduction

When people find themselves in a situation where no one can rescue them because of circumstances they caused themselves or through God's judgement, what is the only solution?

The LORD needs to rescue them. The LORD alone is able to rescue, and he is willing. The whole tone of this passage is, “Do not fear.” He will save a remnant of the people. The remnant does not mean the nation as a whole, but only those who trust in the LORD. They are the true Israel, also called the remnant. (Afrikaans: *oorblyfsel.*)

Note: The prophetic name of Isaiah’s son Shear-Jashub (Isaiah 7:3), which means ‘a remnant will return’, bears this out.

Study Questions

Note: Answer questions from the text.

Read Isaiah 43:1-13

1. In this context, who alone is able to redeem Israel from spiritual bondage? Why is it written in the past tense? 43:1; 42:6-7

2. Will the LORD forget the people of Israel? 43:2

3. How had God saved Israel in the past? How had the LORD given Egypt as a ransom for his people Israel? 43:3

4. What will the LORD do for Israel again? 43:4

5. When the LORD delivers Israel again, what will happen? 43:5-6

A New Exodus

The spiritual Exodus t is important here; the end of the exile, which Jesus mentioned in Nazareth (Luke 4:21). Not the physical land, but the Kingdom of God. A remnant (i.e. Jews) would return, as well as Gentiles!

6. Would all of the people of Israel be redeemed? 43:7-8

7. Does the New Testament agree with this understanding? Romans 9:6-8; Romans 11:26

8. Could anyone have foretold this redemption from slavery? 43:9

9. Who are the witnesses of the LORD? 43:10

The Non-Predicated *I am He* Sayings

YAHWEH alone does not need to describe himself by using a predicate. He is the eternal, self-existing One. Isaiah 43:10 is the second of the seven non-predicated ‘I am He’ statements found in the Book of the Servant.

Isaiah 43:10 "You are my witnesses," declares the LORD, "and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me and understand that **I am he.** Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me.”

10. What is the meaning of the LORD’s non-predicated ‘I am He’ statement? 43:10

11. Are there any other gods? 43:10-12

Note: Isaiah 43:13 is the third of the LORD's seven non-predicated 'I am He' statements in the Book of the Servant.

The Non-Predicated 'I am He' statements thus far are:

1. Isaiah 41:4 "Who has done this and carried it through, calling forth the generations from the beginning? I, the LORD--with **the first of them and with the last--I am he**."

2. Isaiah 43:10 "You are my witnesses," declares the LORD, "and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me and understand that **I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me."**

3. Isaiah 43:13 "Yes, and **from ancient days I am he**. No one can deliver out of my hand. When I act, who can reverse it?"

12. Since when has this observation been true? 43:13

Reflection & Application _____

1. When did the Babylonian exile really end? 61:1-2; Luke 4:17-21

2. Who is the LORD? 43:10, 13

3. What was the task of Israel? 43:10, 12

4. When would these predictions of the salvation of the remnant play out? Which words are used?

…… Isaiah 10:20-25; 11:10-11, 16; 28:5; 37:31-32

…… Isaiah 1:9; 4:2-6; 10:20; 37:31-32

Study 11

Isaiah

"I Am the LORD"

Introduction

YAHWEH is the covenant Name of God. This name describes the covenant relationship between God and Israel:

Exodus 6:2 God also said to Moses, "I am the LORD. [3] I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as God Almighty, but by my name the LORD, *did I not* make myself known to them."

Note: *Did I not* is a better translation of Exodus 6:3 than *I did no*t, which clearly makes no sense.

The LORD promised:

Exodus 6:7 I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians.

In Isaiah 43:14-15, the LORD calls himself:

- the Holy One of Israel
- your Holy One

When the LORD describes Himself as 'the Holy One of Israel' and 'your Holy One', he describes the **exclusive relationship** he has with His people. He also describes his attributes of purity, sinlessness, and moral perfection. As a bridegroom chooses a bride, God chose Israel as His bride (Deuteronomy 7:6-7).

Judah would end up in exile in Babylon because of their wickedness, rebellion and idolatry. Babylon was not only a literal place, from which physical liberation would be necessary. Babylon was also a place symbolising spiritual rebellion and exile. Therefore, physical liberation alone could never solve the problem of sin and rebellion. How could Israel and Judah belong to the LORD who is 'the Holy One', if they were unclean?

Study Questions

Note: Answer questions from the text.

Read Isaiah 43:14-21

1. What would the LORD do to Babylon? 43:14

2. When did this happen? Daniel 5:30-31

3. Who does the LORD identify with? 43:15

4. How did the LORD deliver them in the past? 43:16-17

5. What new thing will the LORD do in the future? 43:18-19

6. What kind of language is used here? 43:19b-20

7. Why would the LORD do this? 43:21

8. How does the LORD feel about the people of Judah? 43:20-21

Reflection & Application _____

1. How was this prophecy fulfilled in history? Isaiah 43:19-21; John 7:37-39

2. Did this offer of drink to the LORD's people, so that they may proclaim his praise, apply only to the Jews? John 4:10; 13-14

Study 12

Isaiah

Redemption from Spiritual Captivity

Introduction

Outwardly, the people of Judah did all the right things. In their religious activity, they thought that they were sound. They kept many religious observances. But their prayer, ritual and sacrifice did not reach the LORD, because they were spiritually dead.

In fact they did not call on YAHWEH. Six times they were accused of not honouring the LORD (43:22-24). Six times we read, ‘You have not’, ‘nor’, ‘or’. On the contrary, they were accused of burdening the LORD with their sins and wearying him with their offences (43:24).

Why was their worship deficient? Worship is not about the individual, but about God. Notice God referring to himself as ‘me’ eight times. True religion should not satisfy people, but God alone! The question is, is the LORD satisfied with what you offer him?

The sacrificial system was not intended to burden or weary them, but that God would provide a way to freedom. It demonstrated that they could never obey God as he demanded, pointing to his grace, freedom and liberty. Yet, they missed it.

At heart, they rejected God. They offered him no proper sacrifice. Their sacrifices were mechanical, idolatrous, and burdensome. We cannot manipulate God by how we practice our religion. They burdened God in the same way as described by Malachi 1:6-11, after the exile.

Holiness is very costly. Human beings naturally opt for outward religious fervour and ritual. To the human mind, it is much more appealing and less demanding than holiness. But it will never please God! “Burnt offerings you brought, but not to me!”

Note the words of Jesus: “Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: `These people honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.' ” **Mark 7:6-7**

Study Questions

Note: Answer questions from the text.

Read Isaiah 43:22-28

1. What was the reason that Israel ended up in Babylon in the first place? 43:24b

2. What did they not do? Note YAHWEH's six accusations. 43:22-24

3. Why was their worship deficient? 43:22-24

4. How did they view sacrifices? 43:23

5. What did their sacrifices reflect about their hearts? 43:24

6. Why then did the One called 'I am He', blot out their sin? Was it because Israel repented, was godly or chose God? 43:25

Note: Isaiah 43:25 is the fifth of the seven 'I am He' statements in the Book of the Servant.

7. What is the meaning of 'remember your sins no more'? 43:25

The Non-Predicated '*I am He*' Sayings

YAHWEH alone does not need to describe himself by using a predicate. He is the eternal, self-existing One.

There are seven ‘I am He’ statements in the Book of the Servant. The ‘*I am He’* sayings encountered thus far are:

Note: There are seven non-predicated ‘I am He’ statements in the Book of the Servant. Below are the four statements encountered thus far.

The Non-Predicated ‘I am He’ statements thus far are:

1. Isaiah 41:4 “Who has done this and carried it through, calling forth the generations from the beginning? I, the LORD--with **the first of them and with the last--I am he**."

2. Isaiah 43:10 "You are my witnesses," declares the LORD, "and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me and understand that **I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me.”**

3. Isaiah 43:13 “Yes, and **from ancient days I am he**. No-one can deliver out of my hand. When I act, who can reverse it?"

4. Isaiah 43:25 "I, even **I, am he who blots out your transgressions**, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more.”

8. What is the significance of the non-predicated ‘I am He’ statement? 43:25

9. What does the LORD mean by “Review the past for me?” 43:26

10. Who was their first father who sinned? And their spokesmen? 43:27

11. What would be the right verdict for their rebellion? 43:28

12. Despite rebellion, sin and corrupt worship, what would the LORD do? 43:25; 44:3

Reflection & Application _____

1. How can God be just and justify the wicked? cf. Isaiah 52:13-53:12

2. What must sinners realise regarding their hopeless situation? 43:26

3. How does the message to Israel regarding sin and salvation have a bearing on us as well? 43:25, 27

4. What is the comforting word from the LORD, despite the total destruction they would face? 43:28, 44:3

Study 13

Isaiah

The Spirit of the LORD

Introduction

The LORD promised to pour out water on the thirsty land, streams on the dry ground. This was not natural water, but a metaphor for the Holy Spirit. We have already seen a glimpse of this in Isaiah 35 and 41.

Isaiah 35:6 Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert. [7] The burning sand will become a pool, the thirsty ground bubbling springs. In the haunts where jackals once lay, grass and reeds and papyrus will grow.

Isaiah 41:18 I will turn the desert into pools of water, and the parched ground into springs.

Once again, we find the promise of the LORD.

Isaiah 44:3 For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground**; I will pour out my Spirit** on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants.

This was what Jesus alluded to at the Feast of Tabernacles.

John 7:37 On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. [38] Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him." [39] By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.

This was also what he promised the Samaritan woman of Sychar.

John 4:13 "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, [14] but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life".

Study Questions

Note: Answer questions from the text.

Read Isaiah 44:1-8

1. What did the LORD urge his servant Israel not to do? 44:1-2

2. Why are they called upon not to fear? What would the LORD do to help them? 44:1-2; Deuteronomy 32:15

3. In what manner would YAHWEH go about doing this? 44:3 cf. 43:19-20

4. Is this a universal promise to all people? 44:1-2, cf. 43:19-20

5. What will the blessing include? 44:4

6. What will be the reaction of the LORD's chosen ones? 44:4-5

7. What is the LORD like? 44:6

8. What is the nature of God? What proof for YAHWEH as the only God is given by YAHWEH himself? 44:7

9. How many gods are there apart from YAHWEH? Is there any God besides YAHWEH? 44:6, 8

10. How can we be sure of God's promises? 44:3-4, 7-8

Reflection & Application _____

1. What did Jesus claim he could do for the Samaritan woman? John 4:10, 13-14

2. What did Jesus claim at the Feast of Tabernacles, and why did this claim have such significance at this particular feast? John 7:37-38

Study 14

Isaiah

Idols and Their Power

Introduction

The idols have already been introduced several times in the book of the Servant (Isaiah 40:18-20; 41:7, 21-29). While God gives human beings movement and fills them with life, the idol is designed not to move, not even to fall! They are nailed down so that they do not topple over (41:7). Our gods are only as good as we can make them!

What are idols like in comparison to YAHWEH? Can you see the irony? God made everything as he is the Creator. However, man makes the idols, and then worships them as if they are God.

When we looked at Isaiah 40:12-31, we noted what YAHWEH was like, compared to the idols of the nations. The command to trust in the LORD for salvation was the message for the people of Israel. But what about the rest of the world? How will they be saved?

The answer is given in Isaiah 41:21-29 and 42:1-9. In the near future, a great conqueror would rise from the East, from the land of Persia, who would conquer the known world. Not only would he destroy the Babylonians, but other nations would not be able to stand up to him.

But what could the idols that the nations put their trust in, really do? They cannot explain the past, nor can they foretell the future; how will they be able to save the nations?

No one can explain the past or foretell the future, but the LORD alone.

Who then is like me? Let him proclaim it. Let him declare and lay out before me what has happened since I established my ancient people, and what is yet to come-- yes, let him foretell what will come (Isaiah 44:7).

Study Questions

Note: Answer questions from the text.

Read Isaiah 44:9-23

1. What is the spiritual condition of idol makers? 44:9 cf. Genesis 1:2

2. Who makes an idol, and what will it profit him? 44:10

3. What will happen to every idol maker? 44:11

4. What is the origin of idol making? 44:12-13

5. What is the irony here? 44:14-15

6. What is the futility of it all? 44:16-17

7. What is extremely sad about all this? 44:18

8. What does an idol worshipper fail to understand? 44:19

9. What is the essence of idol worship? 44:20

10. What must Israel learn from this? 44:21

11. Compared to the idols, what can YAHWEH do? Why is this written in the past tense? 44:22

12. What bears witness to the works of the LORD and brings glory to his name? 44:23

Reflection & Application _____

1. Are you an idol maker?

Note: **John Calvin** pointed out that the human heart is a perpetual idol factory (*officina idolorum*). He explains that human nature constantly invents things as substitutes for God. This is found in his famous theological work, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*.

This idol manufacturing assumes many forms:

Disordered Love: People naturally look to created things—like money, success, approval, or relationships—for ultimate security and worth.

Constant Production: The mind and emotions do not just make only one idol; they constantly manufacture new ones.

Good Things Distorted: Even normal, good aspects of life become idols when they take the supreme place meant for God

2. What is the futility of it all?

3. God makes you; you make the idols. Who can help you in the end?

Study 15

Isaiah

Cyrus: Builder and Conqueror

Introduction

The people of Judah would go into exile because of their sin and rebellion. Those who placed their trust in the idols and gods of the nations would realise how futile it was. They would suffer at the violent hands of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon.

The Babylonian invasion, siege and exile under Nebuchadnezzar would come in three waves.

The First Deportation in 605 BC, during the reign of Jehoiakim (609–598 BC).
The Second Deportation in 597 BC, during the reign of Jehoiachin (598–597 BC).
The Fall of Jerusalem and destruction of the Temple in 586 BC, during the reign of Zedekiah (597–586 BC).

However, after approximately 70 years, as prophesied by Jeremiah (Jeremiah 25:11-12), the LORD would raise up a deliverer to rescue his people from Babylon and to mete out judgement against the Babylonians. This would take place with the Fall of Babylon in 539 BC. The Neo-Babylonian Empire would exist and flourish only for as long as was needed to purify the people of Judah.

Kings of Judah, history, and contemporary Babylonian Kings

Jehoiakim	609-598 BC		
First Deportation			605 BC
Jehoiachin	598–597 BC	Nebuchadnezzar	
Second Deportation			597 BC
Zedekiah	597–586 BC	Nebuchadnezzar	
Fall of Jerusalem			586 BC
		Evil-Merodach	562–560 BC
		Nergal Sharezer	560–556 BC
		Nabonidus	556–539 BC
		Belshazzar	542–539 BC
		Fall of Babylon	539 BC
		Return of the Jews	538 BC

Study Questions

Note: Answer questions from the text.

Read Isaiah 44:24-45:13

1. What was the LORD's relationship to the people of Judah? 44:24a

2. What is the LORD's relationship to the heavens and the earth? 44:24b

3. What does the LORD continuously do throughout history? Name five things. 44:25-28

   ……..

   ……..

   ……..

   ……..

   ……..

4. What does the LORD call Cyrus and why? Would Cyrus not be a pagan king? 44:28; Ezra 1:1-3

5. Why would the LORD call Cyrus his anointed? 45:1

6. What would the LORD help Cyrus to accomplish? 45:2-3a

7. What would Cyrus realise? 45:3b

8. For whose sake alone does the LORD enable Cyrus? 45:4

9. What would Cyrus have to acknowledge in the end? 45:5-7

10. Who does the LORD summon as his witnesses? 45:8

11. Is there any wisdom in quarrelling with your Maker? Can the LORD do as he pleases? 44:9-10

12. Will Cyrus question the works of the LORD and things to come? 45:11

13. Who is the LORD? 45:12

14. Will Cyrus do the LORD's will of his own accord, and will he look for a reward? 45:13

Reflection & Application _____

1. What do you think was the influence of Daniel on Cyrus? Daniel 1:21; 6:28; 8:2; 10:1; cf. Daniel 4:17, 34-35.

2. How does Ezra cast light on the understanding of King Cyrus regarding YAHWEH? Ezra 1:1-3

Study 16

Isaiah

No Other Saviour

Introduction

This passage was possibly written between 716 BC and 701 BC during the time of King Hezekiah. King Hezekiah was the prominent and faithful king of Judah who enacted major religious reforms, destroying pagan altars and restoring temple worship.

Hezekiah began to reign in Judah around 729 B.C. as co-regent with his father Ahaz (736–716 BC) at the age of 25. After that, he reigned as sole regent for another 29 years (c. 716–687 BC).

During this time, he revolted against Assyrian control, trusted in God, and successfully defended Jerusalem from Sennacherib, while also expanding his territory and prospering during his 29-year reign.

Less than 100 years after his reign ended, Israel would go into exile to Babylon in two deportations, in 605 BC and 597 BC. In 586 BC, Jerusalem would fall, and the temple would be destroyed. The Jews would remain in Babylon for almost 70 years until released by Cyrus the Medo-Persian, around 538 BC.

In Babylon, they would live under the power of the kings of Babylon. The Babylonian gods, e.g. Bel and Nebo, seemed to be supreme. This passage describes Israel's situation in exile.

World history follows the same trajectory today. Great forces seem to be unleashed across the globe by the super-rich, advanced technology, hostile political powers and a corrupt church. What can we learn from this passage in Isaiah?

Study Questions

Note: Answer questions from the text.

Read Isaiah 45:14-25

‘I am God, there is no other’

1. Who is the ‘you’ the LORD is speaking to in 45:14?

2. What is the significance of Egypt, Cush and the Sabeans? 45:14a

3. What will all the nations acknowledge? 45:14b; Philippians 2:11

Note: The nations will say: “Your God is only One, there is no other!”
Five times in this passage, we read: “I am God, there is no other” (45:14, 18, 21, 22; 46:9).
Six times in the wider context we read the same thing (43:10-11; 44:6, 8; 45:5, 6).

4. What will the people of God, i.e. ‘Jerusalem’, realise? 45:15

5. What does the LORD want us to understand? Name three things? 45:14-16

6. What will they all have in common? 45:6; 45:14b

Note: They will come without being conquered! They will come in chains to be set free.

7. What will happen to the idol makers? And to those who trusted in idols? 45:16

8. What does it mean that all of Israel will be saved? 45:17, Romans 11:26; Galatians 6:15-16

I have not spoken in secret

9. Isaiah says: “Truly you are a God who hides himself.” Is God unknowable? Must people look for God by occult means, spirit guides or astrology? 45:15

10. How can we know God? 45:18; Psalm 19:1-4; Romans 1:19-20

Isaiah 45:18-19 …….

…….

Psalm 19:1-4 …….

…….

Romans 1:19-20 .……

…….

Note: We see the same in Isaiah 40:12, 22; 42:5, 45:12.

11. What is the second reason whereby we can know God? 45:19-21

12. What do both creation and world history make very clear? 45:21b

The Response of the Nations

13. What should the nations be doing? 45:22

14. Will this be fulfilled in world history? 45:23

15. What will happen to those who raged against YAHWEH? 45:24

16. In whom will the descendants of Israel exult and why? Is this ethnic Israel? 45:22-23, 25

Reflection & Application _____

1. YAHWEH did not speak in secret. He spoke through creation and fulfilled prophecy in world history. What is the final way in which YAHWEH spoke? John 18:19-20

2. How is Isaiah 45:22-23, *'Before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear'*, fulfilled? Philippians 2:9-11

3. How do believing Gentiles relate to believing Israel? Galatians 3:26-29; 4:22-31; 6:15-16

Study 17

Isaiah

I Will Carry You

Introduction

Idols must have been a great scourge in Israel, as here we meet the idols again. We have already encountered the problem of idolatry in Isaiah 40:18-20; Isaiah 41:7, 21-29 and Isaiah 44:9-23. This time they are called by name, but in real life, they are many and varied.

In Babylon they would meet idol worship in a new and virulent form. The Babylonian kings were supposedly incarnations of the gods Bel (father), the Babylonian version of Baal, and Nebo (son) with names such as:

- Bel-Shazzar
- Nabu-Polassar
- Nabu-Chadnezzar
- Nabu-Nidus.

Note: the Satanic counterfeit of the God the Father and God the Son.

Even Daniel and his three friends would be renamed after the gods of Babylon:

- Daniel (God is my Judge) was renamed Belteshazzar (Keeper of the treasures of Bel or Baal).
- Hananiah (Yah (YAHWEH) has been gracious) was renamed Shadrach (after Aku the moon god).
- Mishael (Who is what God is?) was renamed Meshach (Who is what Aku is?).
- Azariah (Yah (YAHWEH) has helped) was renamed Abed-Nego (Servant of Nabu or Nebo, son of Bel).

In this passage, the futility of serving and worshipping idols is once again highlighted and contrasted with the ability of the LORD to do the very things expected of idols.

Study Questions

Note: Answer questions from the text.

Read Isaiah 46:1-13

1. What are some of the names of the gods of the Babylonians? 46:1-2

2. What are the images or idols of the gods? 46:1

3. How do these gods move? What describes their ability? 46:1

4. What do they do for those who are finding life difficult? What will happen to these gods themselves? 46:2

5. In contrast with the Babylonians carrying their gods, who carries Israel? 46:3

6. How long will the LORD carry them and sustain them? 46:4

Note: In Isaiah 46:4 we find the fifth non-predicated 'I am He' statement in the book of the Servant. There are seven of these statements in the Book of the Servant.

The Non-Predicated 'I am He' statements thus far are:

1. Isaiah 41:4 "Who has done this and carried it through, calling forth the generations from the beginning? I, the LORD--with **the first of them and with the last--I am he**."

2. Isaiah 43:10 "You are my witnesses," declares the LORD, "and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me and understand that **I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me."**

3. Isaiah 43:13 “Yes, and **from ancient days I am he**. No one can deliver out of my hand. When I act, who can reverse it?"

4. Isaiah 43:25 "I, even **I, am he who blots out your transgressions**, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more.”

5. Isaiah 46:4 “Even to your old age and grey hairs **I am he**, **I am he who will sustain you.** I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you.”

7. What is YAHWEH claiming regarding himself? 46:4

8. Can the people of Israel compare the LORD to the gods of Babylon? 46:5

9. What can be concluded about the gods of Babylon and their representative images? 46:6-7

10. What lesson must the people of Israel learn about all this? 46:8

11. What do the people of Israel have to call to mind? What will this tell them? 46:9

12. What does the LORD tell about the past and the future? 46:10

13. What does the LORD tell them is going to happen? Who is he speaking of? 46:11

14. What was the indictment against the people of Israel? 46:12

15. Where will righteousness and salvation come from? 46:13

Reflection & Application _____

1. We may look upon these ancient nations and their idols and think of them as primitive. However, we too have idols in whom we trust. Which idols do we have?

2. As what can lack of trust in God be described? Matthew 6:25-34

Study 18

Isaiah

The Fall of Babylon

Introduction

The people of Judah would go into exile for almost 70 years. The exile would start in 605 BC, and there would be another deportation in 597 BC. The city of Jerusalem would be sacked and the temple destroyed in 586 BC. However, in 539 BC, Cyrus the Great would conquer Babylon and give the Jews permission to return home.

The Neo-Babylonian kingdom would last for as long as the Jews needed to be in exile to fulfil the 70-year prediction of Jeremiah (Jeremiah 25:11-12). From 605 to 539 BC was 67 years.

The physical exile would therefore last for 70 years, rounded to the nearest multiple of ten. However, the spiritual exile of the Jews would last 7 times 70 or 490 years, as prophesied in Daniel 9:24-27.

Study Questions

Note: Answer questions from the text.

Read Isaiah 47:1-15

1. What would happen to Babylon in due time? 47:1

2. Where would the Babylonians go? 47:2

3. What would be the outcome for the Babylonians? 47:3

4. What would the people of Judah recognise? 47:4

5. What would be the outcome for the Babylonian Empire? 47:5

6. What would be the LORD's charge against the Babylonians? 47:6

7. What proved to be the Babylonians' greatest downfall? 47:7-8

8. What would overtake them in a single day? 47:8b-9

9. In what did the Babylonians trust? 47:10 cf. Habakkuk 1:6-11

10. What did the claim 'I am, and there is none besides me' indicate? 47:8, 10 cf. Habakkuk 1:11

11. What was going to happen to the Babylonians? 47:11

12. What did the LORD ironically command the Babylonians to keep on doing? 47:12

13. What was the LORD's challenge to the Babylonians? 47:13

14. What was the reality of their gods, their idols and their wise men? 47:14-15

Reflection & Application _____

1. What is the sobering warning from Isaiah 47:1-15?

2. Why does the book of Revelation devote a whole chapter to the Fall of Babylon? How is it similar to Babylon in Isaiah 47? Revelation 18:1-24

3. What is the danger to you when things go very well, such as gaining a high position, wealth or great power?

Study 19

Isaiah

Free at Last!

Introduction

In this section, the LORD addresses the visible covenant community, those called by the name of Israel, who come from the line of Judah. They take oaths in the name of the LORD, and they invoke the God of Israel (48:1). They claim to be inhabitants of the holy city and claim to rely on the God of Israel, the LORD of Hosts.

"Listen to this, O house of Jacob, you who are called by the name of Israel and come from the line of Judah, you who take oaths in the name of the LORD and invoke the God of Israel-- **but not in truth or righteousness** -- you who call yourselves citizens of the holy city and rely on the God of Israel -- the LORD of Hosts is his name" (Isaiah 48:1-2).

However, the LORD addresses them as Jacob. The name Jacob refers to the deceiver, before his name was changed to Israel. When the prophets speak of the people of Israel as wicked, they call them Jacob, the deceiver. Ya`aqob (יַעֲקֹב) meaning Jacob 'heel holder' or 'supplanter'.

When the LORD's prophets speak positively regarding the people of Israel, they often call them Jeshurun, or the 'upright one' (Deuteronomy 33:5, 26; Isaiah 44:2).

Yeshurun (יְשֻׁרוּן) meaning 'upright one'. Jeshurun is a symbolic name for Israel describing her ideal character.

Despite all their claims and presumption, they were not all the actual people of God, as they were not calling upon the LORD in truth and righteousness. As they are described as stubborn and rebellious, they were clearly not believers.

Study Questions

Note: Answer questions from the text.

Read Isaiah 48:1-11

1. Who was the LORD addressing? Did the right nationality and knowledge of the right God guarantee spiritual success? 48:1-2

2. What did the LORD foretell long ago? 48:3a

3. What happened to them suddenly? 48:3b

4. What was the state of the nation at large? 48:4

5. Why did the LORD foretell these things long ago? 48:5

6. In whom were the people from the line of Judah placing their trust? 48:5

7. What did the LORD want them to recognise? 48:6

8. What would the LORD do anew in their day? 48:6b-7

9. What could they no longer claim? 48:7b-8

10. What did the LORD know regarding the people of Judah? 48:8b

11. What did the LORD determine not to do, and for whose sake? Why is it for his sake? 48:9, 11

12. What was the purpose of the judgment of the LORD against Judah? 48:10

Reflection & Application _____

1. Why does the LORD not immediately and totally destroy rebels who invoke the name of the LORD and claim to be part of the covenant community? For example, if a church or denomination loses its way and starts proclaiming ideas and teaching not in truth and righteousness. 48:1-2

2. Will the LORD refine his church, often by affliction, when they go astray? Cf. Revelation 2:5, 16; 23; 3:3, 18-19

Study 20

Isaiah

The LORD who Speaks!

Introduction

We often hear the objection: ‘We cannot hear God.’ ‘I do not know where God is.’ ‘I do not know if he is there.’ ‘I cannot see God’. ‘I certainly do not understand God.’ The problem is not that God does not speak. The LORD speaks, but the problem is that people’s ears are closed, their eyes are blind, and their hearts are hard. This is exactly the problem Isaiah faced when he was called and commissioned. It is uncanny how our situation matches Isaiah’s experience.

Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send me!" He said, "Go and tell this people: "`Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving.' Make the heart of this people calloused; make their ears dull and close their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed" (Isaiah 6:8-10).

These people, i.e. the people of Judah, would not hear. The problem for Isaiah was, how long did he have to continue with his preaching? The LORD answered Isaiah: "Until the cities lie ruined and without inhabitant, until the houses are left deserted and the fields ruined and ravaged, until the LORD has sent everyone far away and the land is utterly forsaken” (Isaiah 6:11-12).

Isaiah started prophesying in 740 BC upon King Uzziah’s death. Four kings later, in 701 BC, with the Assyrian invasion and siege of Jerusalem, Isaiah was still active. Around him, the land lay in ruins. Yet the people would not listen. The prophets would continue until 605 BC, a hundred years later, when the Babylonians invaded the land and took the people of Judah into exile. Through the prophet Isaiah, the LORD was addressing the hard-of-hearing covenant community and repeatedly commanded them to ‘Listen!’ (48:1, in 48:12, 14 and 16). The LORD did speak in the past and he still speaks today and he does so in three important ways.

- The LORD speaks through creation.
- The LORD speaks through history.
- The LORD speaks in Person.

Study Questions

Note: Answer questions from the text.

Read Isaiah 48:12-22

1. What does ‘I am the first and the last’ mean? 48:12

2. What does the LORD’s self-declaration ‘I am He!’ mean? 48:12

The Non-Predicated *‘I am He’* Sayings

YAHWEH alone does not need to describe himself by using a predicate. He is the eternal, self-existing One. There are seven non-predicated ‘I am He’ statements in the Book of the Servant. In Isaiah 48:12 we encounter the sixth of these ‘I am He’ statements.

The Non-Predicated ‘I am He’ statements encountered thus far are:

1. Isaiah 41:4 “Who has done this and carried it through, calling forth the generations from the beginning? I, the LORD--with **the first of them and with the last--I am he**."

2. Isaiah 43:10 "You are my witnesses," declares the LORD, "and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me and understand that **I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me.”**

3. Isaiah 43:13 “Yes, and **from ancient days I am he**. No one can deliver out of my hand. When I act, who can reverse it?"

4. Isaiah 43:25 "I, even **I, am he who blots out your transgressions**, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more.”

5. Isaiah 46:4 “Even to your old age and grey hairs **I am he**, **I am he who will sustain you.** I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you.”

6. Isaiah 48:12 "Listen to me, O Jacob, Israel, whom I have called: **I am he; I am the first and I am the last**."

The LORD speaks through Creation

3. Notice the Word 'Listen!' What was the voice Israel had to hear? In which voice did YAHWEH speak? 48:12-13

4. What was the essence of the message? 48:12-13

5. How can you hear the LORD's voice? What do the heavens declare regarding God? Psalm 19:1-4

Note: The laws of motion, the DNA code, the building blocks of the universe. The 118 elements and the 16 subatomic particles. Incredibly complex creations, all constructed using a few basic building blocks. The sign of an extreme and incomparable intelligence.

The LORD not only speaks through creation, but he also speaks through history.

The LORD who speaks through History and Prophecy

6. Can the idols and the gods of this world predict or foretell anything?

7. Note the repeated word: Listen! "Come together, all of you, and *listen*…" To what must they listen? 48:14b

8. How did the LORD speak through history, and to whom in this case specifically? 48:14-15

9. What is prophecy? 41:22b-23a

10. In which other books apart from the OT and NT do we find prophecy?

11. About what specifically was the prophecy here? 48:15

12. What was this person's name? 44:28, 45:1, 13

Note: All of this was literally fulfilled. If this was written around 701 BC with the siege of Jerusalem, and the exile would take place in 605 BC, this would mean that Isaiah prophesied these events more than 160 years in advance. Cyrus would destroy Babylon in 539 BC and allow the exiles to return in 538 BC. There are many such prophecies in the OT and NT.

The LORD is in control of creation, and creation speaks.
The LORD is in control of history and world events; they speak.
But the LORD speaks in a third, even greater and more direct manner.

The LORD speaks in Person

13. Who is this person saying, "Come near to me and listen"? 48:16

14. Does YAHWEH speak in secret? 48:16

15. How did that happen? Who is the person speaking throughout this section? 48:12-16

Note: The pronoun ‘I’.

- Throughout the section, the person who speaks is the LORD.

My own hand laid the foundations of the earth, and my right hand spread out the heavens; when I summon them, they all stand up together.

- I have prophesied the future with Cyrus.

I, even I, have spoken; yes, I have called him. I will bring him, and he will succeed in his mission.
The one who did these things spoke, and it has not been a secret.
"From the first announcement, *I have not spoken in secret; at the time it happens, I am there."*

16. How was YAHWEH speaking in person fulfilled in history? John 18:20

Note: Jesus is referring to Isaiah and, in particular, Isaiah 48. And here is the absolutely mind-boggling message to Isaiah as well as to the Jews. This person called YAHWEH has been sent to earth to speak in the synagogues and temples of the Jews.

17. By whom was the person called YAHWEH, who created and who prophesied, sent? 48:16

18. How many divine persons are mentioned in this text? 48:16

Reflection & Application _____

1. Can anyone truly say, ‘Where is God? I cannot see him, hear him or understand him’?

2. How did the LORD speak in person? John 18:5

Note: The One who speaks throughout this paragraph of Scripture is named YAHWEH.

- He is the I am He
- He is the First and the Last
- He is the Creator
- He is the God of prophecy and history
- He is the One who does not speak in secret
- He is the One who has been sent by the LORD God

3. What will happen if you listen? Revelation 2:7,11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22

4. God spoke through creation and prophecy. How did he speak in these last days? Hebrews 1:1-2

Study 21

Isaiah

The Servant's Double Task

Servant Song 2

Introduction

The LORD who speaks through creation, through prophecy and world history, is also the LORD who will speak in person. How will he be able to speak in person? The LORD will speak through his servant.

We find four Servant Songs in the book of the Servant (Isiah 38-55)

The Servant Songs are as follows:

Servant Song 1	Isaiah 42:1-4
Servant Song 2	**Isaiah 49:1-6**
Servant Song 3	Isaiah 50:4-9
Servant Song 4	Isaiah 52:13-53:12

In this study, we will look at the second Servant Song. Notice that the word *listen* which connects Isaiah 48:12-16, a description of the person and work of the servant, with Isaiah 49:1-6, the second Servant Song.

Isaiah 48:1 "*Listen* to this, O house of Jacob, you who are called by the name of Israel and come from the line of Judah."

Isaiah 48:12 "*Listen* to me, O Jacob, Israel, whom I have called: I am he; I am the first and I am the last."

Isaiah 48:14 "Come together, all of you, and *listen*: Which of *the idols* has foretold these things?"

Isaiah 48:16 "Come near me and *listen* to this: "From the first announcement I have not spoken in secret; at the time it happens, I am there." And now the Sovereign LORD has sent me, with his Spirit."

In Isaiah 49:1-6 the 'me' of 48:12 and 16 is explained further. Now it is not only Jacob that must listen, but also the islands or coastlands, as well as the distant nations.

Isaiah 49:1 *Listen* to me, you islands; hear this, you distant nations…

Study Questions

Note: Answer questions from the text.

Read Isaiah 49:1-13

The LORD will speak through His Servant.

1. What are the implications of the command that the islands (or coastlands), as well as the nations, must listen? 49:1a

2. Who will be the LORD's voice to the islands and the nations? 49:1b

3. How will the LORD speak to the islands and the nations? 49:2 cf. Revelation 1:16; 2:12, 16; 19:15

4. Why is the Servant of the LORD called Israel? 49:3 cf. 42:18-19; 48:1b-2

5. What will be the Servant of the LORD's response regarding his work of speaking? 49:4a

6. To whom will the Servant look for reward? 49:4b

7. How did the Servant appear on earth? 49:5

8. How does Israel differ in 49:3 and 49:5?

The Servant will speak Freedom!

9. Instead of failing in his mission, what will the Servant accomplish? What will be the Servant's reward? 49:6

10. What other commission will be given to the Servant of the LORD? How far will the Servant's message of salvation reach? 49:6b

11. What did the LORD say regarding the people of Israel's general reaction to the Servant's message? 49:7a

12. However, what did the LORD promise instead regarding the reaction of the nations to the Servant's voice and message? 49:7b

13. What did the LORD promise the Servant? 49:8

14. Who are *the people*? 49:8

15. What is the servant's message and what kind of message is it? 49:6, 9 cf. 42:18-19

16. What will be the reward for those who hear? What kind of language is this? 49:9b-11

Note: Words such as *neither hunger nor thirst*, *springs of water* and *roads and highways in the desert* indicate Exodus language. Here it speaks of a highway out of Babylon, i.e. a New Exodus.

17. Who will respond when they hear the message of salvation? 49:12

18. What will the LORD do for his people and how will creation react? 49:13

Reflection & Application _____

1. The Servant's mouth and message are like a sharp sword. Who fulfilled Isaiah 49:2 in history? Revelation 1:16; 2:12, 16; Revelation 19:11-16

2. What was the Servant's success? Revelation 12:5; 15:4; 21:24, 26; 22:2

Study 22

Isaiah

Divine Confirmation: Worldwide Success

Introduction

What will be the confirmation that the Servant's mission was a success? The fulfilment of prophecy is the proof. The prophet Isaiah claimed that the Servant would be a covenant for the people and a light for the gentiles to open blind eyes, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness (42:6-7).

The Servant would not only bring back those of Israel whom the LORD had kept, but many nations would come as well (49:6). Kings and princes would bow down (49:7). Many would stream into Zion because of the Servant's message (49:12).

If nobody or very few would come, it would be a clear indication that this prophecy was false.

Study Questions

Note: Answer questions from the text.

Read Isaiah 49:14-26

1. What was the response of Zion to the LORD's promise of redemption in 49:9-13? 49:14

2. How did the LORD respond to this misunderstanding? 49:15

3. Where is Zion always kept as a memorial before the LORD? 49:16

4. What will happen to Zion's children in the future? 49:17-18a

5. How will the LORD love and honour Zion? 49:18b

6. What will happen to the city of Zion? 49:19

7. How many people will be in Zion? 49:20; Zechariah 2:4b; 8:20-23

8. How many will be the sons of the barren woman and will she be surprised? 49:21; 54:1; cf. Galatians 4:27

Note: This idea of the barren woman is developed in Isaiah 54:1.

9. Where will all these children of Zion come from? 49:22; Zechariah 8:20-23; cf. Galatians 3:28-29

10. To what do the kings and queens of the nations refer? 49:23

11. Can plunder be taken from warriors, or captives rescued from the fierce? 49:24

12. However, is it possible for the LORD to free captives and plunder the fierce? 49:25 cf. Mark 3:27; Matthew 12:29

13. What will the LORD do to the oppressors of Zion? 49:26

14. When the LORD redeems Zion, what will all of mankind know? 49:26b

Reflection & Application _____

1. The barren woman and her offspring are a promise from Genesis 15:5-6. Who are these children from the barren woman? Isaiah 54:1, Galatians 4:27

Note: Haggai 2:6-9; Zechariah 8:20-23; Revelation 7:9 etc.

2. What will happen to the enemies of God? Revelation 19:17-21

Study 23

Isaiah

Nation and Servant, a Contrast

Servant Song 3

Introduction

We learnt that God had spoken in the past. In future the LORD will speak again through his Servant. The Servant will bring a message of freedom, to set the captives free.

What is not clear at the moment is whether the Servant will only have a message to set the captives free, as those who hold others in captivity will not simply let them go. What is the liberating and redeeming work the Servant will accomplish? What action would the Servant undertake to bring about redemption?

Will the people of Israel accept the Servant's message? We read in the previous section that the Servant's message will bring back some, but not all. As Isaiah's son's name, Shear-Jashub, indicates (7:3), only a remnant will return.

Isaiah 10:21 *A **remnant*** will return, a **remnant** of Jacob will return to the Mighty God. [22] Though your people, O Israel, be like the sand by the sea, only **a remnant** will return

Isaiah 49:6 he says: "It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and *bring back those of Israel I have kept***.**

In this section, Isaiah 50:1 to 51:16, the answer to these questions will become clear.

We find four Servant Songs in the Book of the Servant, i.e. Isaiah 38-55. In this study, we will look at the third Servant Song, which will begin to explain the Servant's work of redemption.

The Servant Songs are as follows:

Servant Song 1	Isaiah 42:1-4
Servant Song 2	Isaiah 49:1-6
Servant Song 3	**Isaiah 50:4-9**
Servant Song 4	Isaiah 52:13-53:12

Study Questions

Note: Answer questions from the text.

Read Isaiah 50:1-11

1. Why were the people of Judah sent away? Did the LORD divorce their mother? Why did the Jews end up in Babylon? 50:1

2. What did the LORD repeatedly do for Israel and how did they respond? 50:2

3. Was the LORD unable to rescue the people of Judah from Babylon? 50:2-3

4. How would the LORD eventually rescue the Jews from Babylonian captivity? 50:4a

5. How does the Servant of the LORD differ from the rebellious servant Israel? 50:4b cf. 42:19-20

6. Who is speaking here in the first person? 50:4-5

7. Who was called the servant of the LORD in the Old Exodus? Joshua 1:2, 7, 13, 15

8. How would God rescue his people again? Deuteronomy 18:15, 18

9. Where would the LORD place His words? 50:4; Deuteronomy 18:18

10. How would the people of Israel treat the Servant of the LORD? 50:6; Mark 10:33-34; Luke 18:32

11. How would the Servant react to his treatment? 50:6b-7

12. Would the accusations and persecutions he will face deter him from his mission? 50:8-9

Note: We find similar echoes in Romans 8:33-34: Who will accuse us? If God is for us, who can be against us? There is now no accusation or condemnation, nor separation.

This brings the third Servant song to a close. A choice has to be made. Hear and obey the Servant's message or reject it.

Darkness or Light?

13. If they reject the Servant, can they be the true people of God? 50:10a

14. What is the Servant's call of redemption still today? What must those in darkness do? 50:10b

15. What will happen to those who reject the Servant's message and walk by their own light? 50:11

Reflection & Application _____

1. How do you enter Zion to become a citizen? 49:9, 25; 50:10

2. What is the work of God? John 6:29; 1 John 5:5

Study 24

Isaiah

The LORD who Comforts Zion

Introduction

Zion - The People of God

Sometimes Israel was called the daughter of Zion (1:8, 10:32, 16:1, 37:2, 52:2, 62:11). For example:

Isaiah 1:8 The Daughter of Zion is left like a shelter in a vineyard, like a hut in a field of melons, like a city under siege.

However, who or what was Zion? Zion was the ideal Jerusalem, a city of righteousness (1:26-27). It contained a people who worship the LORD in truth and holiness (Isaiah 2:2-3; 4:3, 52:1; 60:14). Zion was an ideal which Israel had not attained (Isaiah 52:1).

Only those who are holy will be able to enter into Zion.

Isaiah 35:8 And a highway will be there; it will be called the Way of Holiness. The unclean will not journey on it; it will be for those who walk in that Way; wicked fools will not go about on it. [9] No lion will be there, nor will any ferocious beast get up on it; they will not be found there. But only the redeemed will walk there, [10] and the ransomed of the LORD will return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away.

The words listen (33), hear (35) and look (37) all appear in the book of the Servant more than 30 times. The people of God or Zion are those who are able to listen, hear and look. On the other hand, blindness is referred to 13 times and being deaf 5 times to describe those who do not qualify to be citizens of Zion.

Study Questions

Note: Answer questions from the text.

Read Isaiah 51:1-16

Zion - The People of God

1. What is the characteristic of the true people of God? 51:1-2

2. Who are the children of Abraham? 51:2 Genesis 15:6-7; Galatians 3:28-29; Galatians 4:26-28

3. Who or what is Zion? 51:3; Psalm 87; Hebrews 11:10, 16; 12:22-24; 13:14

4. Who are the LORD's people and the LORD's nation? 51:4

5. What was inevitably going to happen? To what do the LORD's righteousness, salvation and arm refer? 51:5

6. What will happen to this present creation and its inhabitants in future? 51:6

7. Who are God's people? 51:7a

8. What must God's people refrain from doing? 51:7b

9. What will God do to those who insult and shame his people? 51:8

The Highway to Zion - a New Exodus

10. What was the call to the Arm of the LORD? What did the Arm of the LORD have to do? 51:9a

11. What had the Arm of the LORD accomplished in the past? Who was Rahab? 51:9b-10 cf. Exodus 6:6; Isaiah 30:9

12. What was the result of the LORD's deliverance? 51:10

13. What would be the result of the new deliverance and exodus when the Arm of the LORD was revealed again? 50:11

14. What was the ransom price in Egypt and to whom was it paid? Numbers 3:11-13

Note: Remember: The slaves in Egypt were ransomed, a life for a life. The ransom price was paid to God, not to the Pharaoh.

Numbers 3:11 The LORD also said to Moses, [12] "I have taken the Levites from among the Israelites in place of the first male offspring of every Israelite woman. The Levites are mine, [13] for all the firstborn are mine. When I struck down all the firstborn in Egypt, I set apart for myself every firstborn in Israel, whether man or animal. They are to be mine. I am the LORD."

15. According to this section, what was coming soon and what would happen to the LORD's people? 51:11

The LORD will comfort Zion

16. Who will be the one to comfort Zion? 51:12a, 15

The Non-Predicated '*I am He'* Sayings

There are seven non-predicated 'I am He' statements in the Book of the Servant. YAHWEH alone does not need to qualify himself by using a predicate. He is the eternal, self-existing One. Isaiah 51:12 is the last of these non-predicated 'I am He' statements.

The non-predicated 'I am He' statements

1. Isaiah 41:4 "Who has done this and carried it through, calling forth the generations from the beginning? I, the LORD--with **the first of them and with the last--I am he**."

2. Isaiah 43:10 "You are my witnesses," declares the LORD, "and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me and understand that **I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me."**

3. Isaiah 43:13 "Yes, and **from ancient days I am he**. No one can deliver out of my hand. When I act, who can reverse it?"

4. Isaiah 43:25 "I, even **I, am he who blots out your transgressions**, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more."

5. Isaiah 46:4 "Even to your old age and grey hairs **I am he**, **I am he who will sustain you.** I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you."

6. Isaiah 48:12 "Listen to me, O Jacob, Israel, whom I have called: **I am he; I am the first and I am the last**."

7. Isaiah 51:12 "I, even **I, am he who comforts you**. Who are you that you fear mortal men, the sons of men, who are but grass…"

17. Should the LORD's people, the ransomed of the LORD, fear mortal men? What are mortal and finite men compared to the LORD? 51:12b-13

18. Who were the cowering prisoners YAHWEH is speaking of? Could they be all of Israel? 51:14 cf. 42:7

19. What was the good news for the prisoner? 51:14

20. How could they be sure of this? What is the meaning of the Name the LORD of Hosts? 51:15

21. Who was the LORD speaking to? 51:16

22. If the cowering prisoners are not Israel, then who are they? 51:16b

Note: The oppression that is mentioned is not physical Babylon. It is a release from sin and the power of the evil one. It agrees with the comfort promised in Isaiah 40:1-2, a setting free from sin and evil powers.

Reflection & Application _____

1. Have you entered Zion? Revelation 20:15

2. How will this liberation be accomplished? 51:16a cf. 49:2

Study 25

Isaiah

The LORD's Love for Zion

Introduction

In this passage, there is an urgent call for the people of Zion to flee Babylon. The urgency is demonstrated by the repeated command: 'Awake, awake!' and 'Depart, depart…!' which clearly brackets the situation. This also connects with the preceding passage.

Isaiah 51:9 *Awake, awake!* Clothe yourself with strength, O arm of the LORD…
A promise of deliverance**.**

Isaiah 51:17 *Awake, awake!* Rise up, O Jerusalem …
A description of their desperate situation.

Isaiah 52:1 *Awake, awake*, O Zion, clothe yourself with strength.
A promise of deliverance.

Isaiah 52:11 *Depart, depart*, go out from there!

This reminds us of the night of the first Passover in Egypt, when a similar command was issued during the night, after the death of the firstborn. The people of Israel were in bondage, and they were delivered via the LORD's mighty acts of judgement and attributed to the arm of the LORD.

Exodus 12:31 During the night Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, "**Up! Leave** my people, you and the Israelites! **Go**, worship the LORD as you have requested.
[32] **Take** your flocks and herds, as you have said, **and go**…"

As in the first Exodus, so Israel would find themselves in exile again, this time in Babylon. Physically, they would be delivered by Cyrus. However, they would still be Babylonians at heart. They needed to be delivered from spiritual bondage via the Arm of the LORD. Some questions that will be raised in this section are:

- Who or what was 'Zion'? 51:16-17; 52:1-2
- What was 'the cup of the LORD's wrath'? How could the cup of wrath be taken away, despite the fact that she deserved it? 51:17, 21-23
- Who or what was 'the Arm of the LORD'? 51:9; 52:10; 53:1
- How would God's justice be satisfied? If they were in exile because of rebellion and wickedness, why would Zion be given royal robes and dignity instead?

Study Questions

Note: Answer questions from the text.

Read Isaiah 51:17-52:12

1. Who was the LORD speaking to, whom he addressed as *Zion* and *Jerusalem*? 51:16-17

2. What was the urgent command to Jerusalem, who had experienced the LORD's wrath? What does this remind you of? 51:17

3. What was the problem with Jerusalem's sons in the past? What had happened to them because of their condition? 51:18-19

4. What was the result of the condition of Jerusalem's sons' inability to guide her? 51:20

5. What did the afflicted have to hear? What would the LORD do for her? 51:21-22

6. In whose hand would the LORD place the cup of wrath? 51:23

7. How did Zion have to respond when this happened? 52:1 cf. Exodus 12:31-32

8. How would they be redeemed? What would be the ransom paid for their freedom? 52:3

9. What had happened to Israel in the past? 52:4

10. What were the enemies of God's people doing again in their time? 52:5

11. What would the LORD do to restore the honour of his name? 52:6

12. What was the good news or good tidings for Zion? What metaphor was Isaiah using? 52:7 cf. 40:1

Note: They were a city under siege. The battle was being fought for her deliverance. When the news came by means of the gospel messenger from the battlefront, they had to spot him running over the mountains and note the manner of his running.
It would be a recognition of *`how beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring this news´.*

13. What was the work of the watchmen on Zion's walls? What did the watchmen have to do when the time came? 52:8

The Arm of the LORD

14. What did the people of Jerusalem have to do when the good news of deliverance was shouted from the city walls? 52:9

15. How would they be able to recognise it? What was the content of the good news? 52:10

16. What was this *arm of the LORD* the prophet was speaking about? Exodus 6:6-7

17. What were these mighty acts of judgement? Exodus 3:20; 6:6; 7:4

18. What did *'in the sight of all the nations'* mean? 52:10

19. What must true citizens of Zion immediately do when they receive the good news? 52:11

20. What was this kind of language called? 52:11-12

Reflection & Application _____

1. What was the good news about how God would save his people? Mark 1:1, 15

2. How would the LORD lay bare his holy arm in the sight of all the nations? Isaiah 52:13-15; John 19:19-20

3. How will the LORD restore the honour of his name?

Study 26

Isaiah

Redeeming Zion by Substitution

Servant Song 4

Introduction

Note the following important concepts from the Old Exodus, as they all facilitate understanding of the fourth Servant Song.

Bondage: The firstborn Son of God, namely Israel, was in bondage in Egypt (Exodus 4:22-23).

Plagues: God's wrath was unleashed against Egypt. This was demonstrated by the ten plagues. We repeatedly hear the words affliction, smite and strike.

Death of the Firstborn: The final plague was the death of the firstborn.

Substitution: The Israelites could protect themselves by the blood of the Passover lamb (Numbers 3:11-13).

The Exodus: The Israelites were led out by the Arm of the LORD (Exodus 6:6).

Sinai: Covenant agreement, ratification by blood (Exodus 24:7-8).

Curses: In Deuteronomy 32:1-43 we find the Song of the LORD, taught by Moses, containing both warnings and curses following disobedience. The curses are found in expanded form in Deuteronomy 28:15-68.

The people of Israel would end up in bondage in Babylon in future. Physically they would be delivered by Cyrus, but spiritually many were citizens of Babylon. To address this spiritual bondage, a New Exodus was needed.

Isaiah 52:11 Depart, depart, go out from there! Touch no unclean thing! Come out from it and be pure, you who carry the vessels of the LORD.

Study Questions

Note: Answer questions from the text.

Read Isaiah 52:13-53:6

1. Who or what is the Arm of the LORD? 52:10, 53:1, Exodus 6:6

2. In what manner was God's saving power displayed in the Old Exodus? Exodus 6:6

3. What or who is the 'Arm of the LORD' referring to in 52:10-53:1? Note 52:10, 13, 15; 53:1 especially.

4. What kind of work was involved in the exaltation or lifting up of the Servant? 52:14-15; Exodus 24:6-8

5. How will the Servant of the LORD be identified? How will the people of God be able to recognise this servant? 52:13

6. Why is this lifting up necessary? What does it signify?

7. In what manner will the Servant of the LORD be exalted? 52:15

8. What does this sprinkling with blood signify? Exodus 24:7-8

9. Will the unbelieving world accept his exaltation? Why not? 52:14

Note: The coronation of a great King or Emperor of a world empire? Many will be appalled when they observe his exaltation! Now, if this is the exaltation of the LORD, displaying his holy arm whereby he is going to save, then humanly speaking, something must be very wrong here. This would be a different kind of exaltation. Therefore, many will be appalled.

Rejection: His exaltation and lifting up involved disfigurement and marring. Beyond human likeness, the end result, unlike any human recognition; he would be **an object of horror.**

His face - his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man.

Marred: *mishchath* (מִשְׁחַת) meaning *disfigurement* (of face).

His face will be disfigured beyond recognition.

His form - his form marred beyond human likeness, i.e. his body would be grotesquely mangled. His human form, i.e. his body, will be so broken that he will not be recognisable as being human. How could anyone possibly believe that this mangled human form, this disfigured face, that this is the Arm of the LORD? The one through whom the LORD will send to save his people? However, there is another reality. Just as many were appalled, so he will sprinkle many nations.

10. What does *'He will sprinkle many nations'* mean? 52:15; Exodus 24:7-8

Note: A covenant is ratified by blood. The Servant would somehow do what Moses did, who sprinkled the people of Israel with the blood of the Covenant.

However, the Servant would sprinkle:

- Not just the people of Israel, but many nations.
- Not with the blood of a bull or a goat, but with his own blood.
- Not for the ratification of the Old Covenant, but by instating a new covenant.

11. How will those who are sprinkled understand? Will it be because of their insight? 52:15

The Message of the LORD

12. What does this mean? 53:1

13. What is the LORD's message for his people and for the nations? 53:1

14. Is this message difficult for people to understand? 53:2

Note: In **1 Corinthians 1:22-24**, Paul explains that Jews look for power and Greeks look for wisdom. However, the message of the cross is foolishness to the Greeks and a stumbling block to the Jews!

15. What was significant about the message of Isaiah when we compare it with the events surrounding the first Passover and Exodus?

16. What does the text: 'Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him **stricken** by God, **smitten** by him, and **afflicted'**, mean? 53:4

17. Who are the 'Egyptians', the enemies of God, in the new story? 53:5

Note: The greatest suffering was not physical: That which caused his face to be disfigured and his body to be mangled. His greatest suffering was invisible, our guilt laid upon him. It is for our transgressions that he is pierced. It is for our iniquities that he is crushed. It is the punishment we deserve that was upon him. This is how the Arm of the LORD is revealed!

18. What is the Arm of the LORD? How is the Arm of the LORD revealed?

19. Who will believe that this marred Servant is the Arm of the LORD? 53:1

20. What will even the redeemed say, looking at the Servant? 53:2-3

21. What would they understand regarding God's action against the Servant? 53:4, 10

22. What would the redeemed realise was God's will? 53:4, 10

23. What is the incredible and unthinkable conclusion? 53:4-6

Redemption & Substitution

24. What astonishing conclusion do the redeemed reach? Isaiah 53:1-6

Note: ***His*** sorrows and suffering in 53:3 are actually ***our*** suffering and sorrows in 53:4! The inverted word order of 53:4a stresses the exchange of roles.

Sorrows: Hebrew *makob* (מַכְאֹב); Greek *malakia* (μαλακία).

Suffering or grief: Hebrew *choli* (חֳלִי); Greek *phlygy* (πληγή).

25. What was their initial misunderstanding? 53:3

26. What is the Servant's work? 53:4-5

27. What does the Servant do in our place? 53:6

Reflection & Application _____

See and Understand!

1. Why was the Servant of the LORD afflicted in this way? What was the reason? 53:4-6

2. Is this true for you? Which two options are there?

   Isaiah 52:14 ……..

   Isaiah 52:15 ……..

Study 27

Isaiah

The Hope of Justification and Resurrection

Servant Song 4

Introduction

In Isaiah 52:7, we hear the glad tidings, the **good news** of **salvation** and **peace**.

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

The Good news was that the LORD would once again display his saving power by laying bare his holy Arm in the sight of all the nations.

Isaiah 52:10 The LORD will lay bare his **holy Arm** in the sight of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth will see **the salvation of our God**.

The Arm of the Lord, or the saving power of God, was someone called the Servant of the LORD (YAHWEH).

Isaiah 52:13 See, my servant will act wisely / have success; he will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted.

The good news of salvation for the people of Zion is that the Servant saved us by the penal substitution of himself.

Isaiah 53:5 But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.

Let us look at the suffering, death and resurrection of the Servant of the Lord. I.e. what did the Servant of the LORD accomplish?

Study Questions

Note: Answer questions from the text.

Read Isaiah 53:7-12

The Servant's Penal Substitution

1. What happened to the Servant? 53:7

2. Did the Servant die? 53:8-9

3. What was the sad and terrible end? Was any guilt ascribed to the Servant, for which he had to die? 53:8-9

4. For what reason did the Servant die? 53:8

5. Did any other prophet bear the same message of substitutionary atonement as Isaiah? Daniel 9:24-26

Note: Daniel prophesies that within 70 times 7, which is 490 years, the Anointed One or Messiah would come. The Messiah would: 'finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, and be anointed as the most holy'. And then the Anointed One will be cut off.

Daniel 9:24 "Seventy `sevens' are decreed for **your people** and **your holy city** (Zion) to **finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy.** [25] "Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until **the Anointed One**, the ruler, comes, there will be seven `sevens', and sixty-two `sevens'. It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble. [26] After the sixty-two 'sevens', **the Anointed One** will be **cut off** and will have nothing."

Compare that with Isaiah 53:8 For he was **cut off** from the land of the living; ***for the transgression of my people he was stricken***.

6. What did the Servant of the LORD achieve? 53:10

The Servant's Glorious Resurrection

7. How do we know it is true? That this is indeed God's will and plan? Is there any proof that the penal substitution of the Servant accomplished what he had set out to do? 53:10-11

8. What did Jesus say about his time in the grave? Matthew 12:40

9. What will the Servant see? What is the Servant's reward? 53:10

10. Was this God's plan gone wrong? Or did the Servant misread the will of the LORD? 53:10

11. Did the followers of Jesus understand the resurrection? Luke 24:20-21

The Servant's Particular Justification

Apart from fulfilling the prophecy of the identity, substitution and resurrection of the Servant, something needs to be added.

12. Is it only because Jesus rose from the dead that we know that we are justified? 53:11b

13. How do the redeemed realise that the rejection is temporary? 53:11

14. Why are we justified? What does justification mean? 53:11b-12

15. Why is this necessary? 2 Corinthians 5:21

16. What language is this: "**he bore the sin of many**, and made intercession for the transgressors"? 53:12c

Note: The Wrath of God against our sin falls on the Servant.
The Servant is the Sacrificial Lamb. The Wrath of God has passed over the redeemed because of the blood of the Lamb. Now the Redeemed are free to go. He has given his life as a ransom for many.

17. What will the Servant see after his work of penal substitution? What will be his fame and final exaltation? 53:12

18. Does many mean all? If not, why not? Why is this important? 53:12c

Note: No one else would be sufficient, but someone who is both God and man. Man to fully represent us. A perfect, obedient man. And God to be sufficient unto the justice God requires. One whose life sacrifice would be sufficient for many.

Reflection & Application _____

1. Did the prophets foresee the Messiah's death? Luke 24:25-27; Luke 24:44-47

2. What did Jesus achieve? 2 Corinthians 5:21

3. What happened at the cross? Colossians 2:13-14

Note: This reminds us so much of Psalm 22.

Psalm 22:24 For he has not despised or disdained the suffering of the afflicted one; he has not hidden his face from him but has listened to his cry for help. [26] The poor will eat and be satisfied; they who seek the LORD will praise him **(Jesus)** --may your hearts live for ever! [27] All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations will bow down before him **(Jesus)**, [28] for dominion belongs to the LORD and he rules over the nations. [29] All the rich of the earth will feast and worship; all who go down to the dust will kneel before him **(Jesus)** -- those who cannot keep themselves alive. [30] Posterity will serve him **(Jesus)**; future generations will be told about the Lord (**Jesus)**. [31] They will proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn--for he **(Jesus)** has done it.

4. Do you share this hope as spoken through the prophets and the New Testament? What are the essential elements of this good news?

Study 28

Isaiah

The Glory of Zion

Introduction

3500 years ago, the king of Egypt prevented Israel from worshipping God. On the 14th day of the first month, at midnight, the LORD struck down the firstborn of Egypt (Exodus 12:29). In the light of the full moon, Israel left Egypt (Exodus 12:31-33). The Exodus from Egypt took place, but spiritually, Egypt was in them!

The New Covenant in Christ's Blood

2000 years ago, the night before Passover, in the light of the full moon, none other than the Servant of YAHWEH prepared for a New Exodus in the Garden of Gethsemane. At 12 noon on the 14th of Nisan, 29 AD, he died.

Regarding the Servant of YAHWEH, it must be noted:

Hebrews 9:12 He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all **by his own blood**, having obtained eternal redemption.

His life became an atonement sacrifice, as in the Day of the Atonement, for the many of his people. He became the scapegoat, the sin-bearer, as a substitutionary sacrifice for the sins of many.

Mark 10:45 For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

Afflicted not only by men, but also by God – for us. Cut off or struck from the land of the living – on our behalf. The death of the firstborn, the unique Son of God.

There are those who are appalled at Him and who do not accept Him. In this mangled body, they cannot recognise Jesus as the Saviour of God (52:14).
However, some will see and understand that his death is an atonement for many (52:15; 53:11).

Study Questions

Note: Answer questions from the text.

Read Isaiah 54:1-17

Every Promise Fulfilled

1. Who is the LORD speaking to? 54:1

2. Who was the barren woman? Genesis 11:30; 54:1

3. What does this promise speak of? Genesis 15:5

4. How was this fulfilled? Who are Zion's children? Psalm 87; Galatians 3:28-29

5. Why will the tent have to be enlarged? 54:2-3

6. What was the shame and humiliation of Zion? 54:4

7. Who will be Zion's husband? 54:5

8. What will the LORD do for Zion? 54:6

9. What happened for a while and why? 54:7-8

10. What will the LORD do for his people? 54:8

11. What will happen to the LORD's anger in those days? 54:9

12. What is the LORD's everlasting promise? 54:10

13. How will Zion be rebuilt? 54:11-12

14. Are these literal stones? 54:11-12; Exodus 28; 15-21; 39:8-14

15. How will the sons or children of Zion be taught? 54:13

16. What will Zion permanently know? 54:14

17. What will Zion never know? 54:15-17a

18. To whom does Zion belong? 54:17b

Reflection & Application _____

1. Where is Zion now? Galatians 4:26; Hebrews 12:22-24

2. When will Zion be revealed? Revelation 21:1-4

3. How will Zion be built? Revelation 21:19-20

4. What will Zion be like after that? Revelation 22:1-5

Study 29

Isaiah

The Great Banquet

Introduction

The Servant was afflicted not only by men, but also by God – for us. Cut off or struck from the land of the living – on our behalf. The death of the firstborn, the unique Son of God. Our guilt was placed on him. He faced God's wrath in our place. The sacrificial lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. If his death was the punishment for our sin, how would we know if it has been accomplished? If it had all ended with the Servant's death on that day, would we have any hope? How would we know if the offer of his life was accepted and sufficient for what it was intended? Did the servant accomplish his mission?

Work of the LORD's Servant

Just as Passover led to the Old Exodus, the Old Covenant (Sinai) and Promised Land and freedom, so the Cross leads to a New Exodus, the New Covenant (Golgotha), the Kingdom of God and a new life

The ultimate reality of the cross: The fullness of the KOG. This would lead to God's people truly worshipping God in God's way and in a perfectly renewed world!

Study Questions

Note: Answer questions from the text.

Read Isaiah 55:1-13

Everlasting Covenant

1. What does the invitation to this banquet promise? 55:1-2a; 25:6-9

2. Why waste your money on what is not bread? What does this mean? 55:2

3. The Old Exodus led to the Sinai Covenant. What will the New Exodus lead to?

4. What are some of the benefits of the New Exodus?

5. What do ‘listen’ and ‘hear’ mean in biblical terms? 55:2b-3a

6. What was the faithful love the LORD had promised to David? 55:3b; 2 Samuel 7:12-13

7. Of what did the LORD make David a witness? 55:4

8. What will the people of Zion do for the nations and why? 55:5

9. What will happen to those who are able to hear? 55:6

Sin, Pardon, Glory

10. How will it affect your behaviour? 55:7a

11. What will the LORD do for such a person? 55:7b

12. What is the problem with the blindness and deafness of unbelief? Isaiah 6:9-10

13. What is the difference between 6:9-10 and the message in 55:6-7?

14. Who alone is able to devise such a plan of salvation and such a future? Can any human devise such a plan as a solution to mankind's problems? 55:8-9

15. Will this certainly come to pass? 55:10-11

The Exile has Ended

16. An everlasting covenant needs an everlasting sign. What will be the sign? What is the sign of the Everlasting Covenant? 55:12-13a

17. For whose glory will this place be? 55:13b

18. Will it ever end? 55:13c

Reflection & Application _____

1. Have you joined the New Exodus? What is it? John 14:6

   …….

2. Have you experienced New Life? What is it? Titus 3:4-7

   …….

3. Will you see the New World? How do you know? Romans 8:23

   …….

4. What is the sign or proof that God provides for each covenant?

The Covenant of Noah ……

The Covenant with Abraham ...……

The Covenant at Sinai ...……

The New Covenant ...……

The Everlasting Covenant ...……

The Book of the Servant

When we consider the book of the Servant, we discern the following: The book starts with King Hezekiah's health scare and the Assyrian invasion up to the walls of Jerusalem. Hezekiah's faith is tested and proven, and the LORD delivers him and his people from both threats. However, Hezekiah fails the subsequent temptation of the Babylonian delegation. Because of his failure, as well as the rebellion and idolatry of subsequent kings, his people would go into exile, and even some of his own household would become eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon, the place whose name represents rebellion in the Bible.

However, as soon as this becomes reality, a word of comfort is received from the LORD. The LORD is the creator and in control of world history and the affairs of men. His glory would be revealed to the people of Judah. The LORD would send a deliverer named King Cyrus to set them free from physical exile in Babylon. They would return to Jerusalem, and their physical exile would come to an end. There was, however, a greater problem than their physical exile, of which Babylon was symbolic. They were in spiritual bondage in a place called Babylon, and deliverance from this spiritual reality could only be achieved through a special agent of the LORD named the Servant of the LORD.

The Servant of the LORD would not only set the people of Israel free, but he would also be a deliverer to all the nations of the world. The nations and the coastlands would put their hopes in him. The people of Israel and the citizens of many nations would be set free from darkness and bondage and return to the ideal of Jerusalem, namely a place called Zion. Zion was a city where only the righteous and the holy could live, and it was not the same as the earthly Jerusalem. It was a city of righteousness and holiness.

The Servant was the one to bring this about, and he would accomplish it in two ways. The Servant would bring a message of good news and salvation and teach what the LORD would instruct him. Second, the Servant of the LORD would act as a deliverer through his work of redemption. He would be exalted, marred beyond human likeness, and he would be cut off from the land of the living. However, the punishment and affliction upon him would be because of the sins of his people. He would act as a penal substitution for the sins of the citizens of Zion.

He would take their sin and guilt upon himself, and this would be accepted by the LORD.

The Servant would bring about spiritual deliverance from a place called Babylon, and after his suffering and death, he would rise again and see his reward: the best of all the nations. Many would enter the city of Zion, and it would be filled with glory. Many from all nations would come and celebrate a great feast together with the Servant.

And so our understanding of many of the themes introduced at the beginning is formed:

1. Comfort for the LORD's people.
2. Good tidings or good news for Zion.
3. The command to: 'Listen, hear and look.'
4. The blind and deaf servant of the LORD, namely Israel.
5. The uniqueness of the LORD vs idols.
6. The righteous Servant of the LORD described in four Servant songs:
    - The Servant would be a Covenant to the people and a light unto the Gentile nations.
    - The Servant would set the peoples free by his teaching.
    - The Servant would be rejected by the people.
    - The Servant would be afflicted, cursed and killed, and he would rise again.
7. The Servant would be a penal substitution for many.
8. The 'I am He' statements, describing the uniqueness of YAHWEH.
9. Citizenship in Babylon.
10. Citizenship in Zion.

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The New Testament and the Servant of the LORD

What is the Servant's identity according to the writers of the New Testament?

All four gospel writers, **Matthew, Mark, Luke and John**, teach that Jesus fulfilled the prophecy of the Servant of Isaiah.

If we look at the **4th Servant Song**: **Isaiah 52:13-53:12**

John says, for example:

John 12:37 Even after Jesus had done all these miraculous signs in their presence, they still would not believe in him. 38 This was to fulfil the word of Isaiah the prophet: "Lord, who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?"

Isaiah 53:1

Paul and Peter, and the writer to the Hebrews, all teach that the servant of the LORD has been fulfilled in Jesus. For example…

Paul writes:

Romans 15:21 Rather, as it is written: "Those who were not told about him will see, and those who have not heard will understand."

Isaiah 52:15

Peter writes:

1 Peter 2:21 To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. 22 He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.

Isaiah 53:9

1 Peter 2:24 He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.

Isaiah 53:5

1 Peter 2:25 For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

Isaiah 53:6

The Writer to the Hebrews has this beautiful allusion to the 4th servant song:

Hebrews 12:24 … to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to **the sprinkled blood** that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

Alluding to **Isaiah 52:15**

If we add all the verses in the 4th servant Song, **Isaiah 52:13-53:12, found in the NT, we see t**hat it is quoted **8 times** directly.

Isaiah 52:15; Isaiah 53:1, 4, 4-5, 7, 7-8, 9, 12

That does not include the many allusions to the 4th Servant Song.

Jesus himself clearly alludes to the Servant of the LORD in Isaiah, of which Mark 10:45 and John 8:28, referring to the 4th Servant Song, are most striking:

Mark 10:45 For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to **serve**, and to give **his life as a ransom for many**.

Alluding to **Isaiah 53:11**

Isaiah 53:11 After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light *of life* and be satisfied; by knowledge of him, my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.

NKJ **John 8:28** Then Jesus said to them, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am *He* …"

John 12:32 "But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself."

Alluding to **Isaiah 52:13**

From these quotations and allusions, we are clear on who the NT writers thought fulfilled the prophecies of the Servant of the LORD in Isaiah.