



Wednesday in the Word

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Isaiah 40-55: Servant Songs a New Servant, a New Covenant and a New Age

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Useful Links

- To listen to MP3s of lectures: <http://www.wednesdayintheword.com/isaiah-servantsongs/>
- Study resources: <http://www.wednesdayintheword.com/isaiah-resources/>
- Understanding Hebrew: <http://www.wednesdayintheword.com/hebrewpoetry/>
- For help on bible study: www.wednesdayintheword.com/biblestudy101/

Background, Dates & Key Words

Dates

Isaiah 1:1 *The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.*

- Uzziah/Azariah 792-740 BC
- Jotham 740-731 BC
- Ahaz 731-715 BC
- Hezekiah 715-698 BC

Isaiah in Hebrew means "Yahweh is salvation". Isaiah was a prophet to the Southern Kingdom (Judah) both before the fall of the northern kingdom (Israel) and before the fall of Jerusalem.

Biblical Background

- 2 Kings 15-21
- 2 Chronicles 26-33

Key Words

While the list below is not complete, these key words provide clues to the message and theme of the Book of Isaiah. The following key words/phrases are loosely grouped together and are from the New American Standard (1995) Version. *Note: "52x/51v" means the phrase occurs 52 times in 51 verses. "3x" means the word occurs 3 times in 3 verses.*

- **Lord** (417x); **God** (127v) **Lord of Hosts** (63x); NOTE: *"I am the Lord"; "no one besides Me"; "no other"*
- **earth** (93x); **heavens** (19x); **heaven** (11x)
- **day** (87x) - Note: *"day of Lord"; "last day"; "in that day"*
- **Israel** (87x); **Judah** (26x); **remnant** (13x)
- **holy** (52v) - Note: *"Holy One of Israel"*
- **nations** (52x); **nation** (19x); **Assyria** (37v); **Babylon** (13x)/**Chaldeans** (7x)
- **glory** (35v)
- **salvation** (25x); **compassion** (14x); **joy** (19x); **covenant** (12x)
- **servant** (22x)
- **woe** (20x); **sword** (18x)
- **redeemer** (13x); **redeemed** (12x); **redemption** (1x)

General Study Questions

Outline

Read the entire passage slowly and carefully. Make an outline, noting what items are parallel, what kind of parallelism you find, who's speaking, who's being spoken about, who's being spoken to, and finding the flow of thought.

Observe

- Circle key words and repeated ideas.
- Identify the metaphors and figurative language.
- What words and/or synonyms are repeated in the text? Or what parallelism and/or ideas are repeated?
- Do you see common themes in the sections? A progression of themes? Contrasting themes?
- How do you see God at work in the passage either explicitly or implicitly? If God speaks in the passage, how does it contribute to the passage?
- If the Servant, Isaiah or the nation of Israel speak, how does it contribute to the passage?

Spiritual Principles & Themes

- Look at the words used to describe the Servant and his actions and his ministry. Does any of this remind you of passages in the Gospels concerning Jesus?
- Look for and state any spiritual principles from this chapter. A spiritual principle is a timeless, universal truth. For example, is there a characteristic that is always true for one who has the Spirit or one who does not have the Spirit? Is there something in the passage that shows God's character, how He works or what He thinks is important?
- Compare with other Scriptures. Do you see themes expressed in the passage that are repeated throughout the Scripture and/or find fulfillment in the life of Jesus?
- What were those already in exile were suppose to learn from this passage?
- What were those about to go into exile were suppose to learn?
- What should believers today should learn from this passage?

Lesson 1 - Introduction

1. For the Author, Date & Background read: <https://www.gty.org/library/bible-introductions/MSB23> and note your findings.
2. For an overview of the book, read: <https://www.raystedman.org/bible-overview/adventuring/isaiah-the-salvation-of-the-lord> and note the major themes.
3. Read Isaiah 1:1 and find the dates of the kings who reigned during Isaiah's ministry.
4. Read Isaiah 6 and note what you learn about Isaiah's call to be a prophet.
5. For the historical background read 2 Kings 15-21 and 2 Chronicles 26-33 and note your findings.
6. Read Isaiah 36-39. Why would the author put this historical prelude right before chapter 40?
7. Read Deuteronomy 4:25-31. How God will enforce the covenant?
8. What do we have in common with the people of exiles? Compare and contrast their situation with the situation for believers today.

Lesson 2- Isaiah 40:1-11

1. Outline & study the passage using the general study questions.
2. What is the nature of the “comfort” in 40:1-2? On what basis is the comfort offered?
3. Note the repetition of the words “call,” “spoken”, “word”, and “voice.” What does that tell you about the theme of this passage? Summarize the message we should call out.
4. What’s the point of the metaphor about the grass and the flowers in vs. 6-8?
5. In 40:9-11, how is God described? Do vs. 10 and vs. 11 contradict each other? How can God be both?
6. What would this passage have meant to those already in exile? To those about to be exiled? What does it mean for modern believers ?

Lesson 3 - Isaiah 40:12-31

1. Outline & study the passage using the general study questions.
2. In 40:12-17, compare the items being measured with the devices used for measuring. What's the point? How does the glory of God compare to the glory of nations?
3. In 40:18-24, how does God compare to idols? How does God compare to other rulers & kings?
4. What's the significance of the questions in 40:21? What point is he making by asking them? What's the point of the metaphor in 40:22-24?
5. How do 40:27-31 summarize this chapter?
6. How does 40:12-31 relate to 40:1-11? What's the point of the whole chapter?

Lesson 4 - Isaiah 42:1-9

1. Outline & study the passage using the general study questions.
2. What is the “justice” referred to in 42:1, 3 and 4?
3. Who/what is the “bruised reed” and “dimly burning wick” in vs. 3?
4. What would it mean for the Servant to “grow dim” or “be crushed” (42:4)?
5. What will the Servant DO according to these verses (42:5-9)?
6. What will the Servant NOT do according to these verses (42:1-9)?
7. Given your study, who could the Servant be and how do you know? Do you think the exiles had enough information to know the Servant’s identity? If not, what were they suppose to learn from these verses?

Lesson 5 - Isaiah 49:1-13

1. Outline & study the passage using the general study questions.
2. Outline 49:1-6 — paying attention to who is speaking when; who is asking what question; who is answering; and who is talking to whom. For example, in vs. 3 “And he said to me”, who said that to whom? Who is the “I” in vs. 4? Hint: Pay attention to the connectives (and, but, thus, etc.)
3. Why does the speaker emphasize that the Lord knew him from the womb (vs. 1,2,5)?
4. In the “thus says the Lord” section (49:7-13), who is “I”, “you” and “they”?
5. The speaker in 49:4 thinks he has “toiled in vain.” What is the Lord’s answer in 49:6-12?
6. Why is 49:13 the conclusion?

Lesson 6 - Isaiah 50:4-11

1. Outline & study the passage using the general study questions.
2. What is the “tongue of the learned one” in 50:4?
3. How can the Servant face humiliation and not be humiliated (50:6-7)?
4. Answer the questions in 50:8-9. How does the metaphor of the moth answer them?
5. Who is being talked about in 50:10? And 50:11?
6. Skim through the gospels. How was this passage fulfilled in the life of Jesus?

Lesson 7 - Isaiah 52:13-53:6

1. Outline & study the passage using the general study questions.
2. This passage divides into three sections. (52:13-14, 53:1-3, 53:4-6). Write a summary statement for each section. Watch the repetition within each section and notice how each section begins and ends.
3. In 52:15, what it is that had not been told or heard that will now be seen and understood?
4. What do the metaphors in 53:1-3 mean? (“tender shoot,” “root out of parched ground”, “one from whom men hide their face”, etc.)
5. Why is the Servant despised (vs. 3)?
6. Notice the pronouns in 53:4-6. Who is doing what?

Lesson 8 - Isaiah 53:7-12

1. Outline & study the passage using the general study questions.
2. Write a summary for 53:7-12. Watch the repetition and the metaphors.
3. Compare 53:7-9 with 1 Peter 2:18-25. How does Peter understand this passage? Who would Peter say the Servant is?
4. Answer the question in 53:8. Who considered that he was cut off for the transgression of others?
5. What did it cost the Servant to be a “guilt offering” (53:10)? What did it cost the Father?
6. What was the Servant’s reward? Note the “therefore” in vs. 12.

Lesson 9 - Isaiah 54:1-17

1. Outline & study the passage using the general study questions.
2. In 54:1 who is the “barren one”? Why should she rejoice?
3. In 54:2-3 who is “you”? Who is “they”? Why should they “enlarge their tent”?
4. Why does Isaiah use a metaphor of family and marriage in this passage? What is the “shame of youth” and the “reproach of widowhood” in vs. 6?
5. In 54:9-10, how are these days like the days of Noah?
6. In 54:7-11 who is the “afflicted one” and what is he being promised?

Lesson 10 - Isaiah 55:1-13

1. Outline & study the passage using the general study questions.
2. Note the repetition of “come”, “listen” and “seek/call” in 55:1-13. What does that suggest to you about the theme of this passage?
3. In 55:2, what is the bread that doesn’t satisfy? By contrast what are we to eat and delight in abundance?
4. Compare the metaphors of “eating” and “bread” here with the words of Jesus in the gospels.
5. What qualifies you to enter the feast Isaiah is describing? Note vs. 3 and vs. 6.
6. Why do vs. 8-9 follow vs. 6-7? What’s the connection?
7. Compare 55:10-13 with our first passage 40:1-11 (especially 40:6-8).

Servant Songs Summary

Passage	Theme	Summary	Key Verse
40:1-31			
42:1-9			
49:1-13			
50:4-11			
52:13- 53:12			
54:1-17			
55:1-13			