

Bible Study
Isaiah 40-66



Trinity Church Adelaide
2021

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Isaiah 40-66 is the second half of *Isaiah*. This is how it works.

In Isaiah 39 Babylon sends envoys to visit Hezekiah after he suffers a near-fatal illness (39:1). There is nothing unusual about that because at that point in time they were allies. So Hezekiah welcomes them gladly – a little too gladly as he shows them all the wealth of his kingdom. When Hezekiah tells Isaiah what he’s done, Isaiah has bad news for him. Babylon may be Judah’s friend now, but a time will come when Babylon will turn on them, invade them, and carry off their people into exile (39:5-7). As it turns out, this is exactly what happens, in 586BC. So the scene is set for the second half of *Isaiah*, in which it is no longer Assyria who is the great threat to Judah’s security, but Babylon.

Isaiah 40-66 is set during the times just before Israel return from exile (Isaiah 40-55) and just after (Isaiah 56-66). As such, in this half of the book Isaiah is writing about a period well in advance of his lifetime, and in a way that predicts the future. He is writing for the future audience of those Israelites who are currently in exile or just back from it. His message to them is that God will return them to Jerusalem and, once they’re back, rebuild and restore it. But it’s also about much more than that. Ever since the start of *Isaiah*, God has hinted that he has bigger plans in store than just saving one city. If Jerusalem lets God have his way with them, he’ll not only save them as a city but make them a ‘light for the Gentiles’. By the time we get to Isaiah 40-66, this vision gets blown open into something even bigger and grander. It turns out that Jerusalem is just an example of a universal human problem, sin, and that God is going to deal with it once for all by a universal saviour, ‘The Servant’, who is going to restore not just Judah and its capital, but the whole order of reality. So by the end of the book, once the Servant has won his victory – though it’s a strange victory, because it involves him suffering, dying and then being raised to life – we see that ‘Jerusalem’ has come to stand not just for a city or a country, but a whole new heaven and new earth. In that sense, we see that *Isaiah* is a tale of two cities: an old, broken, earthly Jerusalem, representing everything that’s wrong with the world; and a new, heavenly Jerusalem, representing everything God has planned for it once he’s restored it. It’s breathtaking. And that’s where Isaiah 40-66 takes us.

Along the way, we’re keen to imbed the core truths of Isaiah into our minds with a selection of four memory verses – two from Isaiah and two from the New Testament. For those of you with children at Trinity Kids, these are the same memory verses your children will be learning, so we hope you have a great time learning them together, whatever your age.

Intro Study - An overview of Isaiah 1-40

When we jump in at chapter 40 it can be helpful to reorient ourselves to what is going on. This study is written for those who want to get up to speed from the sermon series at the end of last year.

To help us get into the right frame of mind, consider the following hypothetical scenario:

It's a hot Adelaide summer and a parent warns their young child to be careful to put shoes on before they walk on the hot pavement: "Watch out, the pavement is hot so put your shoes on so you don't burn your feet"

What impact does this message have on the child before they step onto the hot pavement?

What impact does this message have on the child after they've stepped on the hot pavement without putting shoes on?

God's message for his people through Isaiah is a bit like this warning. It was spoken to the people of Judah during a particular time in their history that was full of anxiety and fear, as God warned them about what was about to happen and how they could prepare for it. But it was also written to be an encouragement and explanation to God's people after those events had occurred – right through to us today, thousands of years later.

We can't look at all of chapters 1-39, but reading Isaiah chapter 1 and the start of chapter 2 gives us a really helpful overview of so much of what God says in the first 39 chapters.

Read Isaiah 1:1-31

Use this table to note down the different things that God says in this chapter (note that not every section will have something for every column).

Section	What does this say about Judah's actions and what they need to change?	What does this say about God's judgment on his people?	What does this say about God's promised blessing for his people?
1:2-1:4			
1:5-1:9			
1:10-1:15			
1:16-1:17			
1:18-1:20			
1:21-1:23			
1:24-1:31			

In many ways Isaiah 1 sums up the message of Isaiah: God's people have wandered from him, for which they face his righteous judgment, yet his judgment comes with the promise of mercy and a vision of hope. All of this was connected to the real historical events that were taking place in and around Jerusalem at the time. If you want to read more about those events in Isaiah and the related historical accounts, see Isaiah 7-8 and the related accounts in 2 Kings 15-17 and 2 Chronicles 28 as well as Isaiah 36-39 and the related accounts in 2 Kings 18-20 and 2 Chronicles 32.

By the time we get to Isaiah 40, so much of the warning from God has already been fulfilled, but none of the promised blessing has come. In Isaiah 40 the tone changes as God helps his people look to the future – some of it in the short term, and some of it in the very long-term future. For those living in the time before God's judgment was expressed in the destruction of Jerusalem, Isaiah's message was a warning to remain faithful to God, whatever may come. For those living in exile and the difficult years that followed it was a call to live in light of God's faithfulness and trust in God's future mercy. As Christians reading Isaiah, we can now see that Jesus has already fulfilled so much of Isaiah's prophecy. He alone has fully experienced the wrath of God – but he did that on our behalf, not for his own sin. And he has begun God's work of renewing his people and restoring his creation. Yet we still long to see the fulfillment of God's great plans for his world.

Isaiah 2:1-5 gives an introduction to this grand future. It is a vision that is revisited a few times up to chapter 39 (see chapters 4, 11, 25-27, 35), but it's when we get to chapters 40-66 that this vision is really expanded on.

Read Isaiah 2:1-5

How is Jerusalem described in this vision?

How is the world described in this vision?

In what sense has this vision begun to be fulfilled in Jesus?

As you look at the world around us now, in what sense is this vision yet to be fulfilled?

What can we give thanks and praise to God for in light of these opening chapters of Isaiah (and their summary of Isaiah 1-39)?

What concerns are you prompted to bring before God, or what sins are you prompted to confess to God, in light of these opening chapters of Isaiah?

Memory Verse:

“Come now, let us settle the matter,” says the LORD. “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.

Isaiah 1:18

Study 1 - Isaiah 40:1-44:23

Getting started

It's not long since we celebrated Christmas and remembered that God has come to be with us in Jesus, which picks up on the promises of Isaiah – Immanuel, God with Us. Yet for many of us, Christmas has probably already faded into the distance and we might not be spending much time thinking about God's presence with us. When you think about God coming to be with you, do you feel comforted by his presence, or fearful at what he'll find?

Background

Unlike Isaiah 1-39, Isaiah 40-66 is set well in advance of Isaiah's own lifetime. At the very end of Isaiah 39, Isaiah warned Judah's king, Hezekiah, that the nation he was relying on to be Judah's ally against Assyria - Babylon - would one day become its enemy and deport its people into exile (39:5-7). Well after Isaiah and Hezekiah had both died, this is exactly what happened: in 586BC, Babylon invaded Judah, destroyed Jerusalem, and took nearly all of its inhabitants into exile.

Isaiah 40:1 comes in on the story just at the point where this exile is about to end. As such, it marks a massive 'jump forward' in the story, and is addressed to a totally different group of people from those addressed in Isaiah 1-39: not Israelites living in the land but in exile, and desperately wanting to go home. If ever there were a group of people in need of some good news, it was them! Thankfully, that's exactly what God has for them and what he starts with in this next section. Let's get into it.

Observation and interpretation

Read Isaiah 40:1-11

'Comfort, comfort my people' are the first words out of God's mouth. What things does he comfort them with?

Given the tone of so much we've read so far in *Isaiah*, how does this make you feel?

Read Isaiah 41:8-10

Having told his readers (whom he now simply calls 'Israel') that he will save them from exile, God now reminds them of the role they've always had as his people.

What is their job title?

How must this job seem impossible, given their current situation?

What is God's promise to them despite this situation?

So far Isaiah has painted a very positive picture of the restoration of God's people. Rescued from exile, redeemed to serve God. Yet when we come to chapter 42 this positive picture is narrowed in from the nation as a whole to focus on one individual. It is as if this person will be the 'ideal Israel': everything that nation is meant to be, but wrapped up in an individual.

Read Isaiah 42:1-4

What does God tell us about this 'servant'?

What word gets repeated is used three times in 42:1-4? What does this tell us about this person's main job?

Isaiah's readers may have been wondering why the focus had turned to an individual instead of the nation, and we might have the same question. God doesn't leave them in the dark for long though...

Read Isaiah 42:18-25

How will Israel as a nation actually go at being God's 'servant'?

What have they failed to learn from their time in exile?

New Testament

Read Matthew 12:9-21

Who does Matthew identify as the 'servant' of Is 42:1-4?

What is it about him that looks so similar to 'the servant'?

Application

Are you feeling guilty at the moment about something you've done or not done? When you get home, write out 40:1-2, but insert your own name in place of 'my people' and 'Jerusalem'. Recite it to yourself to remind you of God's comfort to you in Christ.

Are there areas in your life where you're not letting yourself listen to God (42:18ff)? What needs to change so that you can hear him properly?

Thank God that when we are weak - 'smouldering wicks', 'bruised reeds' - and serve him poorly, Jesus doesn't break us or snuff us out but shows us mercy instead.

Memory Verse:

But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

Titus 3:4-6

(Note that Trinity Kids are only memorising v5, so you could start with that and work up to 4-6, one of the great Trinitarian passages of the Bible)

Study 2 - Isaiah 44:24-48:22

Getting started

Tim Keller says in his book, *Counterfeit Gods*: 'When anything in life is an absolute requirement for your happiness and self-worth, it is essentially an "idol", something you are actually worshipping.' What do you think of this?

Background

God has told Israel that he will free them from exile and bring them back home to Jerusalem, but he hasn't yet told them exactly how. Now, he gets to specifics. And they are surprising! It turns out that God is going to use a pagan king, Cyrus of Persia, to do the job. And Cyrus isn't even going to know he's doing it on God's behalf! As far as Cyrus is concerned, he's conquering Babylon and freeing her captives, including Israel, for solely political and financial reasons. But God doesn't care if Cyrus sees God's hand in his actions or not. God's not insecure: he knows he's the king of the universe and the lord of history, and so as long as Cyrus gets the job done for him and brings his 'servant' Israel home, then that's good enough. That's the point we come in on in this new section.

Observation and interpretation

Read Isaiah 44:24-45:8

What are God's plans for Jerusalem and Judah?

How does Cyrus fit into them?

What is Cyrus' attitude to these plans?

Isaiah is writing 150 years before the events he predicts. *Read 2 Chronicles 36:22-23*. How did these predictions turn out? What does this tell us about who God is? (See 44:26)

Read Isaiah 45:9-13

Israel is naturally surprised that God would select a pagan idolater to save them. What is God's response to their problem with this?

Read Isaiah 46:3-9

God will use an idolater to rescue Israel. Does that mean God approves of idolatry?

Read Isaiah 48:1-5, 12-15

God has made a point of his ability to predict the future when it comes to their salvation (44:26). What insight do these verses give about why God has made a point of telling them of these events ahead of time?

What is the contrast between God makes between himself and idols, and what does this tell us about the real issue in Israel's heart?

New Testament

God tells Israel he will free them from Babylon and take them home to Jerusalem. But to be truly free, they will need more than a new address, because what they are really enslaved by is the idolatry of their own hearts. Until Israel let God deal with *that* they will always be in 'exile' from him - wherever they live. Rather than worrying about Cyrus' idolatry, they should be worrying about their own! When we come to the New Testament, God's message is the same for us.

Read Col 3:5-11.

How are the things Paul lists in 3:5, 'idolatry'? What are we to do to them?

What are we to do instead? How is this possible?

Application

Have you ever had a 'Cyrus moment'? One where God used someone who was totally opposed to Jesus to nonetheless save you from a mess you had made or even rebuke you for a sin? How did you feel? How can *Isaiah* help you respond next time?

God has given us a 'new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator' (Col 3:5). What comfort can we take from this when we fall back into our own forms of idolatry?

Memory Verse:

But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

Titus 3:4-6

Study 3 – Isaiah 49:1-52:12

Getting started

When you watch the news, it's hard to believe that 'salvation is reaching the ends of the earth.' Do you ever get discouraged by the way the world's going?

Background

Isaiah 40-48 has seen a lot of conflict between God and Israel. Although God has said, 'Comfort, comfort my people' (40:1), there is a real question as to whether Israel will accept this comfort or simply retain its stubborn, idolatrous ways. At the end of chapter 48, it feels like God has given up on Israel: *"There is no peace", says the Lord, "for the wicked"* (48:22). But then in chapter 49 there is something new. An anonymous person gets given the title 'Israel' and goes about doing all the things Israel should do. A strange voice has spoken in these chapters from time to time, someone who wants to speak for God (40:6) and be sent by him (48:16). In Is 49, finally he speaks to us at length.

Observation and interpretation

Read Isaiah 49:1-6

What do these verses tell us about 'the servant'?

We've met the servant once before in 42:1-4. What new things do 49:1-6 tell us about him?

The servant is called 'Israel' (49:3) but is also someone who has been sent *to* Israel (49:5). How do you think this works?

What is the servant's ultimate mission?

Read Isaiah 50:4-11

The 'servant' speaks again. What new things do these verses tell us about him?

How are people to respond to him? (50:10-11)

Read Isaiah 52:1-10

The servant is someone who 'wakens' each morning to listen to and obey God (50:4-5). What does God tell Israel to do here (52:1)?

Once they have done this, what does God:

a. tell them to do?

b. say he will do?

New Testament

Read Acts 13:44-48

What are Paul and Barnabas doing and what do the Jewish leaders dislike about it?

How do Paul and Barnabas respond?

Application

How do you think of evangelism: as a matter of obedience or an 'optional extra'? (Be honest, we're all friends here!)

It's often hard to think of outreach as something beautiful (52:7). Why do you think this is? How could *Isaiah* help 'beautify' outreach in our minds?

Isaiah promises that, 'all the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God' (52:10). How does this encourage us get involved in world mission?

Consider the various contexts of your life. What might it look like to have 'beautiful feet' in these different parts of your life? Who can you pray for, that God might give you opportunity to speak with them about God's great Servant he sent to save us?

Memory Verse:

But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Saviour

Titus 3:4-6

Study 4 - Isaiah 52:13-53:12

Getting started

Do you ever wish Christians and Christianity looked more impressive by worldly standards? Why or why not?

Background

God has mentioned the mysterious 'servant' three times now (42:1-4; 49:1-6 and 50:4-9). However, his exact identity and how he will complete his mission is still unclear. We know he will bring *justice* (42:1, 3 & 4), but we don't yet know how. We also know he will bring *forgiveness* (49:5, 6) - even to the ends of the earth - but we don't yet know how he will do that either. How can God use his servant to bring both *justice* and *forgiveness*? If he brings justice, for sinful people won't that mean judgment - the opposite of forgiveness? And if he forgives them, won't that mean ignoring the demands of justice? How will God's servant do it? Finally, we find out: 'My righteous servant will justify many and he will bear their iniquities' (53:11).

Observation and interpretation

Read Isaiah 52:13-53:12

How does the servant look and how do people treat him?

Why did he go through all of this?

a. Did we deserve to suffer?

b. Did he deserve to suffer?

c. And yet, what did he do?

d. And what did that achieve?

What will God do once the servant has done all this?

New Testament

Read 1 Peter 2:21-25

How many quotes or allusions to Is 52:13-53:12 can you see here?

How does this even further deepen our understanding of the identity and mission of 'the servant'?

'Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps' (1 Peter 2:21). In this passage, how does the shape of the Christian life resemble the shape of Jesus' life?

Application

Look back at Is 52:13-53:12. How does this deepen your appreciation for what God has done for you in Jesus? With Good Friday approaching, how can you take time to reflect on this over the coming weeks?

Someone asks you how God can forgive sinful people without being guilty of sweeping wrongdoing under the carpet. How do you use this passage to help you answer them?

Jesus doesn't look terribly impressive to our culture. Christians don't either. We look and feel weak. How does this final 'servant song' get our thinking straight about how God can use weakness for his strength?

Memory Verse:

He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Isaiah 53:5-6

Study 5 – Isaiah 54-55

Getting started

Every beauty pageant contestant in the world always answers the question the same way: 'If you could wish for one thing, what would it be?' 'World peace'. The crowd claps and the rest of us roll our eyes. But why? Why is world peace such an unrealistic goal? What are the things stopping peace in our world?

Background

Isaiah has just explained how 'the servant' will bring both justice and forgiveness to the world. So now, it's time to celebrate! And that's what Isaiah 54-55 is: a series of songs celebrating what the servant has achieved. The theme unifying all of them is 'peace'. The fundamental human problem is the absence of peace: 'There is no peace for the wicked' (48:22). But because the servant has suffered on our behalf, he has brought peace (53:5; 54:10, 13; 55:12). This passage celebrates that truth.

Observation and interpretation

Read Isaiah 54-55

These two chapters are a series of joyful commands followed by colourful images of what salvation looks and feels like. In the table below, fill in the commands, the images, and the promises God makes to assure us that the images will become reality (note: not all will have all three elements).

Verse	Command	Image	Promise
54:1	E.g. 'Sing'	A barren woman now has lots of children.	N/A
54:2			
54:4			
54:16			
55:1			
55:6			

Combining all of these images, how would you describe Isaiah's vision of 'peace' for our world?

New Testament

Read Ephesians 2:14-18

How has Jesus made peace:

a. between us and God?

b. between us and each other?

How does this ultimately fulfil Isaiah's vision for 'world peace'?

Application

Isaiah 54-55 is full of emotion. Isaiah expects us to sing, and not be afraid, and eat, drink and excitedly seek as a result of the good news he's just told us. Often, however, our response to the gospel is far less emotional. We know it in our head but don't feel it in our gut. Are we missing out on something here? If you think you are, ask God to deepen the emotional aspect of your Christian life and give you the kind of godly passions described here.

Is there anyone you not at peace with at the moment, especially a Christian? What can you do to restore it?

Although as Christians we know in our heads that we have peace with God, we sometimes find this hard to accept in our heart. Our consciences condemn us and we lack assurance. So think about these words: *'Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ' (Romans 5:1)*. What is it about the objective nature of the cross that helps us understand that we really are now at peace with God?

Memory Verse:

He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Isaiah 53:5-6

Study 6 - Isaiah 56-59

Getting started

Have you ever re-watched a television show you used to love as a kid but now, as an adult coming back to it, find it deeply disappointing? Or revisited a place from your childhood which seemed huge and magical at the time but now seems small and ordinary? How did you respond?

Background

Isaiah 56-66 is the final part of Isaiah's vision. It launches us further forward again in time to the period following the arrival of the first returnees from Babylon. Upon coming home to Jerusalem, the home of their past, they have mixed emotions. On the one hand it is great to be back: this is, after all, what God had promised them all along! But on the other hand it is deeply disappointing: the city is ruined, their numbers are small, and they are still under Persian rule. They are stuck 'between the times': the return from exile has started but is far from complete (56:8). The question is: how will they use their second chance, now they're back in the land? Chapters 56-59 start answering that question.

Observation and interpretation

Read Isaiah 56:1-8

Now that they're back in the land, what should Israel's approach be to:

a. justice?

b. outsiders (e.g. foreigners and eunuchs)?

According to the following verses, how are Israel going at living up to this 'charter of behaviour'?

a. 56:10-12

b. 57:3-6

c. 58:1-7

d. 59:1-8

Read Isaiah 59:9-15a

What does Israel itself think of its own behaviour?

What confidence does it have in its own ability to change?

Read Isaiah 59:15b-20

What is God's solution for Israel's inability to change its own behaviour?

What will that solution look like for the people in:

a. 59:18?

b. 59:20-21?

New Testament

Read Titus 3:3-7

How were we also powerless to change our own behaviour?

How did God also intervene to save us when could not save ourselves?

How does this give us hope that, having saved us, God will also be at work to change us?

Application

Have you ever been aware of a sin in your life but felt powerless to change it? How did it make you feel? What hope can a passage like this give you in those situations?

Have you ever despaired of people who, no matter how many chances you give them, can never seem to get their act together? What hope does this passage give you for them?

Memory Verse:

But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

Titus 3:4-6

Study 7 – Isaiah 60-64

Getting started

What's the most dramatic sunrise you've ever seen? How did it make you feel?

Background

Isaiah 60-64 comes like a sunrise after the darkness of Isaiah 59. '*See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the Lord rises upon you and his glory appears over you. Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn*' (60:2-3). That is this section in a nutshell: Jerusalem will be turned into a *great* city in which *all nations* can live and over which God will rule *forever*. But this great sunrise hasn't happened yet, so now is the time of decision for any would-be residents of the glorified Jerusalem. Will they be humble or proud? The answer they give to that question will determine whether that day for them will be 'the year of the Lord's favour' or 'the day of vengeance of our God' (61:2).

Observation and interpretation

Read Isaiah 60:1-22

As the sun rises over it, what is the overall impression you get of this new Jerusalem?

Find every mention you can of 'the nations'. What does it say about them?

List every reference to time you can in 60:15-22 (e.g. 'no longer, no more, never, everlasting', etc). What does this tell us about this city?

Read Isaiah 61:1-6

For whom will the 'opening' of this new Jerusalem be 'good news'? What will life be like for them?

However, some will refuse to enter Jerusalem on that day, and for them it will be a 'day of vengeance.' What will life be like for them? See 63:1-6.

New Testament

Read Luke 4:16-21

Who is Jesus saying he is?

What does that mean for us?

Application

How we respond to Jesus is the key to whether or not we'll enter this new Jerusalem. If we come to him poor in spirit, broken-hearted, and grieving about our sin, then his message for us will be 'good news'. Take a moment to reflect. Are there sins you need to grieve over and bring to God?

Being as open as you can with each other, are there things you are broken-hearted about? Feel captive to? Are you mourning? If so, how are Isaiah's - and Jesus' - words of comfort?

Did you notice that Jesus stopped reading in the middle of a sentence? He announced 'the year of the Lord's favour' but would not yet announce 'the day of vengeance'! That won't come until he returns as judge. How is this both an encouragement and a spur for us in our evangelism?

Memory Verse

For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God.

2 Corinthians 1:20

Study 8 – Isaiah 65-66

Getting started

Have you ever prayed – *really* prayed – for Jesus to come back? What drove you to it?

Background

We didn't get to it in our last study, but it turns out Isaiah had real doubts about whether Israel would ever accept the good news of the 'year of the Lord's favour' (61:2). At one point, he cries out to God, '*Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down*' (64:1). Human sin is so ingrained in our world that only a full-blown invasion of earth from heaven will fix it. Is 65-66 is the answer to Isaiah's prayer.

Observation and interpretation

Read Isaiah 65:17-25

What is God going to create?

What will this place be like? How will it be different to our world?

Read Isaiah 66:18-24

Who is invited to come and live in this place? Who does the inviting?

What is the ultimate purpose of living there?

Who doesn't get to live there?

Read the following verses. How has *Isaiah* come full-circle?

a. 1:2 & 66:22

b. 2:2-3 & 66:20

c. 3:8 & 65:18

New Testament

Read Revelation 21:1-8

What looks familiar about this scene?!

With new information between Isaiah and Revelation, who is now shown to be at the centre of it all?

With Easter coming up, how does the resurrection of Jesus give us confidence that this vision isn't just an empty wish?

Application

When we say in the Lord's Prayer, 'Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven', we are effectively praying what Isaiah prays in Is 64:1, 'Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down.' That is, we are praying for the end of the world! What are the tensions we should feel inside ourselves when we pray such a prayer?

Isaiah closes with a scene of the nations not just streaming into Jerusalem but streaming out of it to gather more people from the nations. How does this challenge an 'ants to the honey' approach to church evangelism, where we hope people will just drift close enough to us to get 'stuck'?

Is 65:17 says the new creation will be so new that the past will be totally forgotten. Think of some things you've done that you'd rather forget, and thank God that one day you'll be able to do exactly that!

What's the thing you'll be happiest *won't* be in the new heaven and earth?

What is one new thing you've learned about God, or yourself, or both, as a result of reading *Isaiah*? Thank God for that.

Memory Verse

For no matter how many promises God has made, they are “Yes” in Christ.
And so through him the “Amen” is spoken by us to the glory of God.

2 Corinthians 1:20

