



# The Bible Challenge

A daily guide to reading the Bible in a year

## Isaiah

Chapters 56-66

### Intro: The Prophet of the King

Isaiah the Prophet served as a prophet during the reigns of four kings of Judah: Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah. His main service was to THE king, The LORD God of Hosts. The Prophet's role is to serve the Lord of Hosts by challenging/ inspiring/ judging the kings of the House of Judah.

The purpose of the book centers around the vision of God for Judah and Israel and the world. The ideal is that the reign of God on Earth would begin with Israel and draw

the nations of the world into the Kingdom's blessing. The ultimate vision and earthly reality are two different things. Isaiah holds out the hope of the ideal of Kingdom expansion under the reign of the God of Hosts, while sternly pronouncing judgment on the present sinful state of affairs.

Kings of Judah	Years of Reign
Uzziah	767-740 b.c.
Jotham	750-735
Ahaz	735-715
Hezekiah	715-686

Structure of Isaiah <sup>38</sup>	1-66
The Book of the King	1-37
The Book of the Servant	38-55
The Book of the Anointed Conqueror	56-66

The dramatic announcement of the Book of Isaiah is that The LORD God of Hosts will bear his arm as a paradoxical suffering servant and an anointed conqueror. The general literary shape of the book of Isaiah bears this out.

<sup>38</sup> Isaiah literary structure outlines are taken from J Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction and a Commentary* (InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL, 1993)



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## The Book of the Anointed Conqueror (56-66)

In the last section of the book of Isaiah (38-55), we learned how the Lord would open up a path of universal salvation and redemption for the people of the world through the suffering servant of the Lord.

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### The Book of the Anointed Conqueror      Chap. 56-66

**The Sabbath and The People of God: Ideal and Reality**      56:1-58:14

**The Coming of the Anointed Conqueror: Salvation and Judgment**      59:1-63:6

**The New Heavens and the New Earth: Prayer and Promise**      63:7-66:24

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In this final section, Isaiah paints a picture of ideal universal worship in comparison to what will actually be manifest. He looks to a final judgment by the Anointed Conqueror, and then promises a New Heavens and a New Earth, where the ideal of God will be realized in final and ultimate restoration and final and ultimate judgment.

## The Sabbath and The People of God: Ideal and Reality (56:1-59:13)

As Isaiah has been prophesying all along, the Lord's vision is for a great gathering of people from all nations and tribes. Isaiah paints a vision of that universal gathering centered on keeping the Sabbath holy and then describes the reality is mixed, some of the Lord's people are righteous and others are not.

### Promise of Blessing & Universal Invitation to Keep the Sabbath (56:1-8)

The Lord holds out blessing to the people of the entire world who will come to center their lives on keeping Sabbath. All the peoples of the world are called and invited to keep the Lord's Sabbath by choosing the things that please him and by holding fast to his covenant (56:4). The invitation is universal in scope, none are excluded. (56:3; 8)

*Blessed is the man who does this,*

*and the son of man who holds it fast, who keeps the Sabbath, not profaning it,*

*and keeps his hand from doing any evil.*

*--Isaiah 56:2*



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*“And the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, to minister to him, to love the name of the LORD, and to be his servants, everyone who keeps the Sabbath and does not profane it, and holds fast my covenant—<sup>7</sup> these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.” Isaiah 56:6-7*

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Jesus would enter the Temple of the Lord and pronounce and enact judgment on it, turning over tables and driving out corrupt money changers saying: "Is it not written, "My house shall be called a house of prayer for the nations'? But you have made it a den of robbers." (Mark 11:17)

## **The Beastly Feast: Failure of the Leaders (56:9-12)**

The problem is leadership. Those who have been given the responsibility to lead and guide the people of Israel and the nations to the Lord have chosen to make the Lord's Sabbath a day of to fatten and entertain themselves rather than a day holy to the Lord.

They are likened to the "beasts of the field" and "dogs" who love to slumber all the time but are yet insatiable in their appetites--"they never have enough!"(56:11)

The result of selfish leadership is a sorry state among the people.

## **The State of the Righteous and the Idolaters (57:1-13)**

On the one hand, the righteous suffer under corrupt leadership. Devout people suffer under corruption. Yet they are promised peace. (57:1-2) The rest of the people are called the offspring of the "adulterer and the loose woman" and "children of transgression", offspring of deceit" (56:3-4). Their focus is on their collection of idols and they make an unholy marriage covenant with them! (57:8)



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## The Way to the Sabbath: Repentance (57:14-58:14)

The Lord holds out hope and promise for the peoples of the world if they will humble themselves from the heart and pursue "the way" that the Lord has prepared for them:

*And it shall be said, "Build up, build up, prepare the way, remove every obstruction from my people's way." For thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: "I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite."  
--Isaiah 57:14-15*

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*"Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?  
7 Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?  
8 Then shall your light break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up speedily; your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard.  
--Isaiah 58:6-8*

That "way" is keeping Sabbath and keeping covenant. There is a right and wrong way to do this. There are those who believe themselves to be honoring the Lord and they are missing the Lord's will.

Isaiah holds out the promise of blessing for those who truly honor the Lord. It centers on reversing the injustices so prevalent in a corrupt society and truly dedicating oneself to the worship of the Lord on the Sabbath rather than seeking personal pleasure and going one's own way on the Lord's day. He presents several "if/then" contingency promises (58:6-14):

*"If you turn back your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight and the holy day of the LORD honorable; if you honor it, not going your own ways, or seeking your own pleasure, or talking idly;*

*14 then you shall take delight in the LORD, and I will make you ride on the heights of the earth; I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."  
--Isaiah 58:13-14*

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## The Coming of the Anointed Conqueror: Salvation and Judgment (59:1-63:6)

Despite the universal call and pleadings of the Lord, the corruption and wickedness of the human heart will prove to prevail over masses of humanity. There will be no true universal Sabbath keeping until the Lord comes in final judgment as the Anointed Conqueror over evil and corruption once and for all.

## Your Iniquities have made a Separation (59:1-15)

The sin in the hearts, minds and actions of humanity have led to tremendous corruption and evil for the people of the world. The human system of justice is corrupt. Violence and deceit run rampant. The righteous hope and pray for better, but ultimately darkness seems to prevail over the light.

The problem of human transgression and sin will finally and ultimately give rise to an anointed conqueror who will finally bring an end to human corruption and evil.

*The LORD saw it, and it displeased him  
that there was no justice.*

*<sup>16</sup> He saw that there was no man,  
and wondered that there was no one to  
intercede; then his own arm brought him  
salvation, and his righteousness upheld him.*

*<sup>17</sup> He put on righteousness as a breastplate,  
and a helmet of salvation on his head;  
he put on garments of vengeance for clothing,  
and wrapped himself in zeal as a cloak.*

*--Is. 59:15-17*

*Therefore justice is far  
from us,  
and righteousness  
does not overtake us;  
we hope for light, and  
behold, darkness,  
and for brightness,  
but we walk in gloom.  
<sup>10</sup> We grope for the wall  
like the blind;  
we grope like those  
who have no eyes;  
we stumble at noon as in  
the twilight,  
among those in full  
vigor we are like dead  
men. --Isaiah 59:9-10*

## The Glory of the Lord and the New Jerusalem (60)

With the coming of the Anointed Conqueror, the Arm of the Lord, light dawns and darkness is driven to flight. Isaiah holds a vision of a New Jerusalem which serves the nations and people of the world and is blessed by them in abundance. Evil will be no more All will be righteous. The Lord himself will be the light of the city. There will be no more darkness. In the New Testament, the book of Revelation also holds up the vision of the New Jerusalem (see Rev. 21-22)



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## The Sermon of the Anointed One (61:1-63:6)

In chapters 61-63, we now hear the voice of the Anointed Conqueror himself. His anointing is with the Spirit of the Lord God:

*The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,  
because the LORD has anointed me  
to bring good news to the poor;  
he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,  
to proclaim liberty to the captives,  
and the opening of the prison to those who  
are bound... --Isaiah 61:1*

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*You shall no more be  
termed Forsaken,  
and your land shall  
no more be termed  
Desolate, but you shall  
be called My Delight Is  
in Her, and your land  
Married;  
for the LORD delights in  
you, and your land shall  
be married. --Isa. 62:4*

Jesus would read these words in the synagogue of Nazareth and say, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." (Luke 4:1-21). Jesus is the Anointed Conqueror.

The Anointed One has compassion and love for his people who have been sorely oppressed. He speaks a kind word to the righteous. (61;1-8) His heart is to see the New Jerusalem established like a groom delights over his Bride (62:5; see Rev. 21-22). But there are no kind words for the unrighteous and unjust. The Anointed Conqueror will "trod them in his anger" like grapes in a winepress! (63:1-6)

*For the day of vengeance was in my heart,  
and my year of redemption had come.  
--Is. 63:4*

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## The New Heavens and the New Earth: Prayer and Promise (63:7-66:24)

The final chapters of Isaiah chart the path to the Final Act in God's mighty story of redemption. It begins with a prayer of remembrance of what has gone before and what could have been and then turns to the final chapter and ultimate hope in a New Heavens and a New Earth.



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## The Prayer of Remembrance (63:7-64:12)

The prayer is a combination of plea, remembrance, lament and repentance. The prophet gives voice to the cry of the righteous longing for ultimate redemption. There is honest acknowledgment of sin (63:16; 64:5-7). But the longing is that the LORD would do again what he has done in the past.

*Oh that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains might quake at your presence—*

*<sup>2</sup> as when fire kindles brushwood and the fire causes water to boil—to make your name known to your adversaries, and that the nations might tremble at your presence!*

*<sup>3</sup> When you did awesome things that we did not look for, you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence.*

*<sup>4</sup> From of old no one has heard or perceived by the ear, no eye has seen a God besides you, who acts for those who wait for him.*

*<sup>5</sup> You meet him who joyfully works righteousness, those who remember you in your ways. --Isaiah 64:3-5a*

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*Behold, it is written before me:  
“I will not keep silent, but I will repay; I will indeed repay into their lap  
<sup>7</sup> both your iniquities and your fathers' iniquities together, says the LORD; because they made offerings on the mountains and insulted me on the hills, I will measure into their lap payment for their former deeds.”  
--Isa. 65:6-7*

It is in remembering the LORD, that the righteous find salvation and redemption. The LORD is waiting for his people to remember him and ask him to forget their sins in a plea for mercy and salvation. (64:9)

## The LORD Answers in Promise (65:1-66:24)

The LORD's answer to the petitioners plea serves as a final warning and ultimate promise. It is a final warning to those who would forsake the offer of the LORD to join the Holy people of God in right worship. To those who would reject the LORD, he will ultimately reject them. The judgment of the unrighteous will be final, deadly and eternal in its torment: "their worm shall not die, their fire shall not be quenched" (66:24).



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For those who do seek the Lord and respond to his invitation to keep Sabbath, walk in his paths and honor his covenant, the LORD will grant to them a share in the New Heavens and New Earth. At the heart of the New Earth will be a New Jerusalem. (65:18-19) It will take time for this New Creation to be born.

*Who has heard such a thing?*

*Who has seen such things?*

*Shall a land be born in one day?*

*Shall a nation be brought forth in one moment? --Isaiah 66:8*

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Yet the child will be born! The Lord will come in Fire and judgment and establish his new creation. (66:15-16)

All the nations of the world will be gathered to worship the LORD.

*“For as the new heavens and the new earth  
that I make*

*shall remain before me, says the LORD,  
so shall your offspring and your name  
remain.*

*<sup>23</sup> From new moon to new moon,  
and from Sabbath to Sabbath,  
all flesh shall come to worship before me,  
declares the LORD.*

*--Isa. 66:22-23*

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