



CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION

BIBLE SURVEY

THE UN-DEVOTIONAL

ISAIAH 40-66

Week 3

The Best Is Yet to Come

Isaiah 52

OPENING
up to the Word

Have you ever lived under a cloud of worry and trouble for a long time, finally to have it all suddenly disappear? How did that feel?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. Who will one day never enter Jerusalem (Zion) again (v. 1)? Is this to be taken literally, or as a figure of speech?
2. What would happen to God's name because of the captivity of his people (v. 5)?
3. What part of the human anatomy does God praise in verse 7, and why?
4. Who is introduced in verses 13-14?
5. What do verses 14 and 15 look forward to in the life of the servant of God (the Messiah)?

LIVING
out the Word

1. What impression of God do those acquainted with you have, based on how you deal with your problems? (a) great, (b) good, (c) not so good, (d) bad, (e) none, they don't even know I'm a Christian.
2. What part of your reflection of the life Jesus lives within you seems to make the biggest impression on others? What makes the worst?

WINDOW
on the Word

***"Good news"** (v. 7). Great joy was experienced in 536 B.C. when Israel returned from her captivity. But this joy also looks forward. After all, the best news of all is Jesus and his gospel. **"Sprinkle many nations"** (v. 15). To sprinkle blood was associated with cleansing (Lev 4:6). The Servant's precious blood, sprinkled over the nations, cleanses us from sin.*

*“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!’”*

Isaiah 52:7



PTM photo of the Judean hills near Jerusalem

The Man of Sorrows

Isaiah 53

OPENING
up to the Word

Would you characterize your whole life up to now as: (a) mostly sorrowful, (b) mostly joyful, (c) a little of each, (d) not much of either.

DIGGING
into the Word

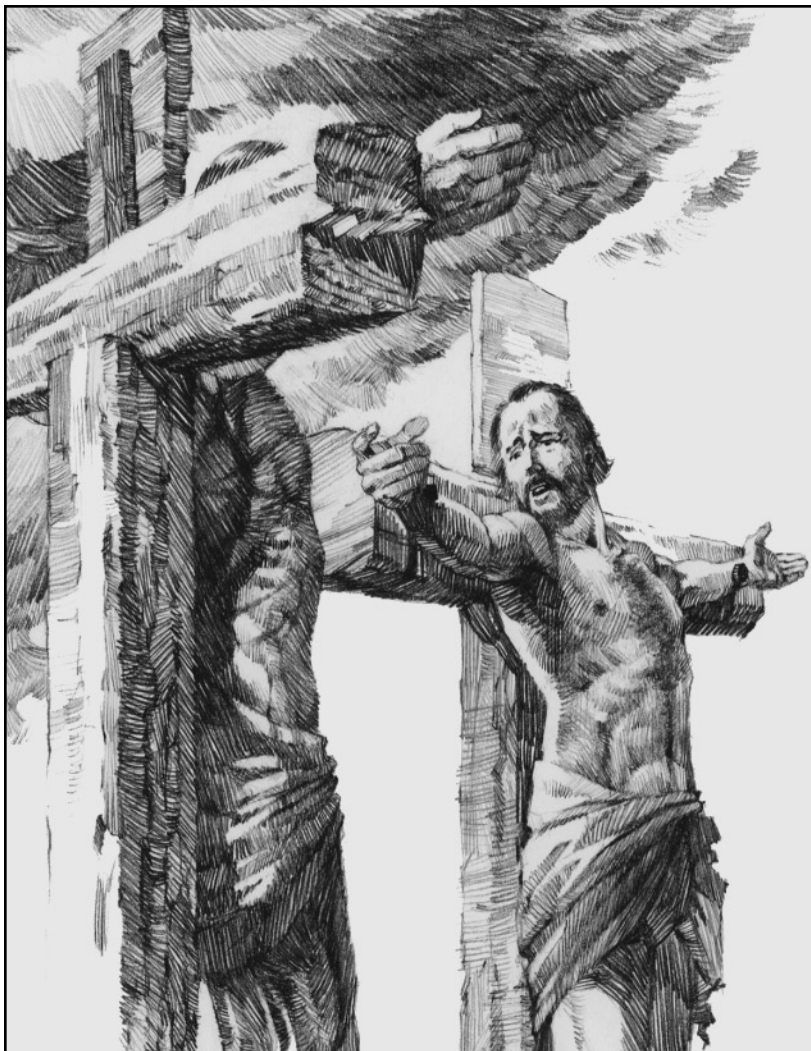
1. According to this text, were people attracted to Jesus by his physical appearance (v. 2)?
2. What would characterize our Lord's life? Does this passage seem to indicate that he would be popular and charismatic (v. 3)?
3. What did God's punishment of Jesus bring to us (v. 5)?
4. What verse in this chapter do you feel John the Baptist had in mind when he called Jesus the "Lamb of God" (Jn 1:27, 35)?
5. List all the negative words this chapter uses for our Lord (examples: *despised, rejected, stricken*).

LIVING
out the Word

1. What surprises you most about the earthly sufferings that our Lord endured?
2. Is Isaiah's description of Jesus as a "man of sorrows" the mental image you have of Jesus?
3. To what degree have you shared with Jesus in his sufferings (1Pe 4:12-16)?

WINDOW
on the Word

Sheep (v. 6) follow one another and are therefore easily led astray. This was an apt picture not only of Israel, but of the human condition. **"Assigned a grave with the wicked...with the rich in his death"** (v. 9). Men who had been crucified were usually not buried, but thrown into a pit as a warning to others. Yet, Joseph of Arimathea, a rich man, was able to persuade Pilate to allow Jesus to be buried in Joseph's own tomb.



“Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.”

Isaiah 53:12

City of the Future

Isaiah 54

OPENING
up to the Word

How do you think most people envision a typical city of the future? How is it different from what we have today?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. Why was Israel called a barren woman (v. 1)?
2. What would Israel have to do in the future to make room for all her descendants (vs. 2-3)?
3. God was not only Israel's husband, but also her _____ (v. 5).
4. Though Israel was unfaithful, how does God describe drawing her back to him (vs. 6-8)?
5. Out of what building materials will God construct the New Jerusalem (vs. 11-12)?

LIVING
out the Word

1. What is your favorite city in the whole world, and why is it special to you?
2. What aspect of the future city of Jerusalem intrigues you most? (a) the atmosphere, (b) the jeweled appearance, (c) the grace, mercy and love flowing from it.
3. As you consider the eternal home being built for you, what are you looking forward to most?

WINDOW
on the Word

*In Israel, a **barren woman** (v. 1) felt disgraced. Among other things, practical considerations for having children included the fact that they helped with the work load and took care of parents in their old age. If you were barren you never received these blessings. Israel was like a barren woman, continually feeling disgrace and mourning.*

The Eternal Thirst Quencher

DAY 18

Isaiah 55

Have you ever been so thirsty that all you could think about was getting something to drink? How long did you have to go without drinking?

1. What kind of thirst and hunger do you think God is referring to here (vs. 1-2)?
2. Did God indicate that Israel was limited in her opportunity to respond to him (v. 6)?
3. How great is the difference between human ways of thinking and acting and those of God (vs. 8-9)?
4. When people come to know God, their lives are transformed. How does Isaiah express this transformation, poetically (vs. 12-13)?

1. Isaiah was speaking of a need common to everyone when he spoke of being thirsty. What were you “thirsty” for before you became a Christian?

2. How has God quenched your thirst?

3. As you look around your world, what do you think is the most common “thirst” people have? (a) forgiveness, (b) relationship with their Creator, (c) purpose and meaning in life, (d) unconditional love.

***“Rain and the snow”** (v. 10). Seemingly overnight, the hard, parched ground in Palestine can bloom with vegetation with the first rain of the season. God’s work has the same effect on our hard, parched hearts—instantly bringing forth spiritual life. **“Thornbush...briers”** (v. 13). Genesis says one of the results of Adam’s sin in the garden was the growth of thorn bushes and briers, which interfere with the growth of good plants (Ge 3:17-19). Verse 13 indicates this symbolic curse will be removed in God’s kingdom.*

OPENING

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DIGGING

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WINDOW

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Encouraging Immigration

Isaiah 56

OPENING
up to the Word

Do you know someone who is an immigrant from another country? What are their feelings about our country?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. Who does the Lord promise not to exclude from his kingdom (v. 3)?
2. What group is promised something better than sons and daughters if they follow the Lord (vs. 3-5)?
3. How will God bless the gentiles (v. 6-7)?
4. In contrast to the wonderful encouragement given to foreigners, what description does God use of Israel (vs. 10-12)?

LIVING
out the Word

1. Why do you believe so many different people want to immigrate to the United States?
2. The vast majority of Christians are gentiles (not Jewish). What has God promised to do for us (Ro 11:13-24, 1Pe 2:9-11)?

WINDOW
on the Word

“Keeps the Sabbath” (v. 2). Isaiah, living under the old covenant, used the Sabbath (the sign of the Sinai covenant) as an example of covenant faithfulness. This was meant to be understood literally for Isaiah’s original audience, living under the old covenant. But for Christians this passage is symbolic, just as Isaiah 52:1 is. In the new covenant, neither circumcision nor Sabbath keeping is required. ***“Foreigners, eunuchs”*** (v. 3). Certain gentiles and eunuchs who had been excluded under the Mosaic covenant (Dt 23:1-3) would find inclusion and equality under the new covenant (Lk 14:15-24; Ro 10:12; Gal 3:28; Col 3:11). The word ***beasts*** (v. 9) could refer to the gentile powers, possibly Babylon.

Eating the Bread of Idolness

DAY 20

Isaiah 57

There has been a marked increase in paganism and the occult in modern culture. Why?

1. What would death secure for the righteous person (vs. 1-2)?
2. What hideous practice had Israel's idolatry led them to (v. 5)?
3. How had the Jews' pagan beliefs even influenced the way they decorated their homes (v. 8)?
4. Who, or what, was Molech, and why did they bring him olive oil and perfumes (v. 9)?
5. Who should Israel have asked to save them when trouble came (v. 13)?

1. Have you ever met anyone who was involved in pagan and occultic practices? Was idol worship involved?

2. Why would someone reject the idea of worshipping the one true God in order to worship an idol?

3. What attracts some people to the occult, or paganism, but repels them from traditional Christianity?

"The righteous perish...to be spared from evil" (v. 1). Hebrew society had deteriorated so badly because of idolatry, immorality and injustice, that the only rest the faithful righteous few could find was in death. In this way they resembled Lot, who was tormented by the evil in Sodom and Gomorrah. ***"You sacrifice your children"*** (v. 5). The Israelites often worshiped their gods on a high hill in a futile attempt to be closer to them. In some ways this practice was similar to the motivation behind the construction of the Tower of Babel. But some of their gods would only be appeased, they thought, by child sacrifice. (Eze 20:31, Hos 13:2). **Molech** (v. 9) was an Ammonite god, who was thought to be appeased through child sacrifice (2Ki 23:10, Jer 32:35).

OPENING

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WINDOW

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*“... and if
you spend
yourselves in
behalf of the
hungry and
satisfy the
needs of the
oppressed,
then your
light will rise
in the
darkness, and
your night
will become
like the
noonday.”*

Isaiah 58:10

Getting the Skinny on Fasting

DAY 21

Isaiah 58

Have you ever gone without food or liquids for an extended time—either voluntarily, or because food and drink were not available?

1. Why did Judah seek God while at the same time rebelling against him (v. 2)?
2. Why didn't God answer them (v. 4)?
3. What were the people of Israel doing that they thought would get God's attention (v. 3)?
4. The Lord pointed out the results of their fasting in verses 4 and 5. What was the problem?
5. What kind of fast did God encourage them to begin (vs. 6-10)?

1. If you've ever gone on a fast, what was your purpose? Did it resemble the one described in verses 6-12? Did it accomplish what you had hoped for?

3. If and when you fast, is your goal: (a) deliverance for yourself or someone else from a problem, (b) guidance, (c) a closer walk with the Lord, (d) loss of weight.

3. Do you believe fasting is appropriate for Christians today, or do you believe it is mainly an Old Testament practice which has been made unnecessary by the work of Jesus Christ and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit?

*The practice of **fasting** was to focus a person's mind on God, to become more obedient and to reflect upon life and God's will. The Jews were fasting to get God's attention, but they made no attempt to change their hearts or attitudes toward God or his word. There was only one fast commanded in the Old Testament, on the **Day of Atonement** (Lev 16:29-31). After the conquest of Israel, other fast days were initiated (Zec 7:3, 5; 8:19). God encouraged the people to seek true righteousness rather than just abstaining from food. **Sabbath observance** (Isa 58:13-14) was a requirement under the old covenant (Ex 20:8-11; Lev 23:3). Isaiah's comments here are addressed to Israelites who had been breaking their covenant with God by disregarding the Sabbath. Sabbath observance is no longer a requirement for Christians under the new covenant (Gal 4:10; 5:1; Col 5:16-17).*

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