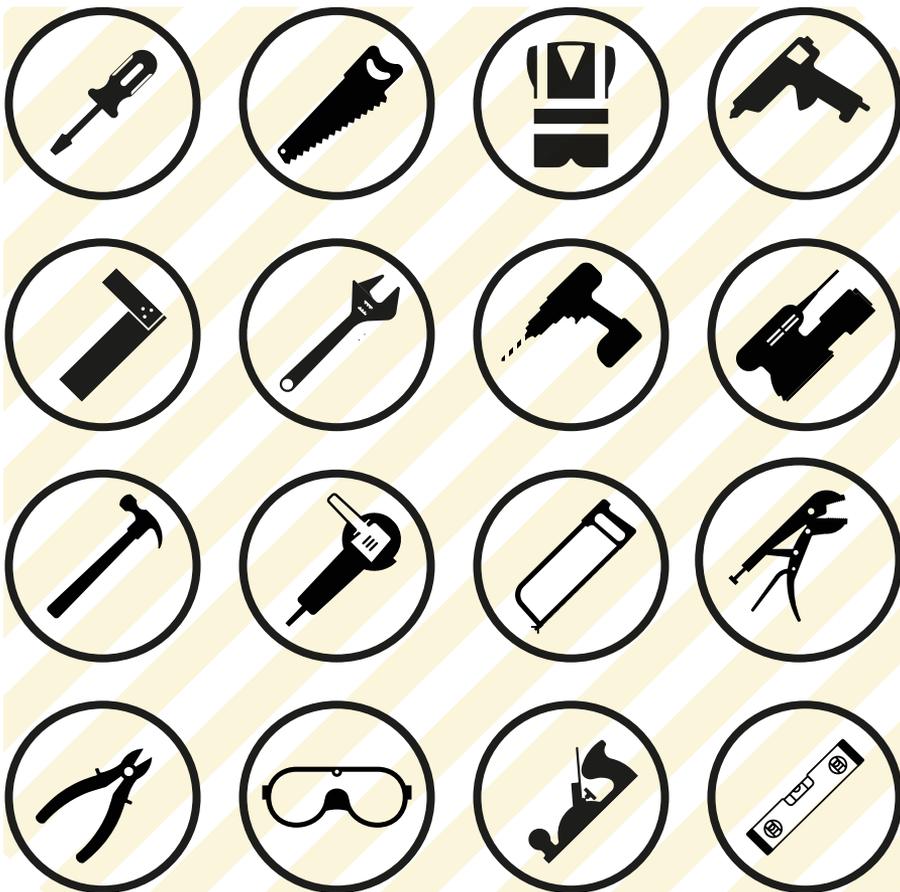


DIG DEEPER

Bible Toolkit



ISAIAH

Andrew Sach

ISAIAH

2:1-22

¹ The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

² It shall come to pass in the latter days
that the mountain of the house of the LORD
shall be established as the highest of the mountains,
and shall be lifted up above the hills;
and all the nations shall flow to it,
³ and many peoples shall come, and say:
“Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,
to the house of the God of Jacob,
that he may teach us his ways
and that we may walk in his paths.”

For out of Zion shall go forth the law,
and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

⁴ He shall judge between the nations,
and shall decide disputes for many peoples;
and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares,
and their spears into pruning hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war anymore.

⁵ O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the LORD.

⁶ For you have rejected your people,
the house of Jacob,
because they are full of things from the east
and of fortune-tellers like the Philistines,
and they strike hands with the children of foreigners.

⁷ Their land is filled with silver and gold,
and there is no end to their treasures;
their land is filled with horses,
and there is no end to their chariots.

⁸ Their land is filled with idols;
they bow down to the work of their hands,
to what their own fingers have made.

⁹ So man is humbled,

and each one is brought low —
do not forgive them!

¹⁰ Enter into the rock
and hide in the dust
from before the terror of the LORD,
and from the splendour of his majesty.

¹¹ The haughty looks of man shall be brought low,
and the lofty pride of men shall be humbled,
and the LORD alone will be exalted in that day.

¹² For the LORD of hosts has a day
against all that is proud and lofty,
against all that is lifted up — and it shall be brought low;

¹³ against all the cedars of Lebanon,
lofty and lifted up;
and against all the oaks of Bashan;

¹⁴ against all the lofty mountains,
and against all the uplifted hills;

¹⁵ against every high tower,
and against every fortified wall;

¹⁶ against all the ships of Tarshish,
and against all the beautiful craft.

¹⁷ And the haughtiness of man shall be humbled,
and the lofty pride of men shall be brought low,
and the LORD alone will be exalted in that day.

¹⁸ And the idols shall utterly pass away.

¹⁹ And people shall enter the caves of the rocks
and the holes of the ground,
from before the terror of the LORD,
and from the splendour of his majesty,
when he rises to terrify the earth.

²⁰ In that day mankind will cast away
their idols of silver and their idols of gold,
which they made for themselves to worship,
to the moles and to the bats,

²¹ to enter the caverns of the rocks
and the clefts of the cliffs,
from before the terror of the LORD,
and from the splendour of his majesty,
when he rises to terrify the earth.

²² Stop regarding man
in whose nostrils is breath,
for of what account is he?

PRAY

“Isaiah said these things because he saw [Jesus’] glory and spoke of him” (John 12:41). Pray that as we study his prophecy this year we would see more of the glory of Christ.

READ

Read the passage a couple of times.



STRUCTURE TOOL

How has the author broken down his material into sections? How do these sections fit together?



TONE AND FEEL TOOL

As we come to the Bible, we should not only pay attention to the point that is being made, but also how it is being made. What feelings does the passage evoke?



‘SO WHAT?’ TOOL

How am I being invited to respond? What difference will this make to my life? What difference will this make to our church?



TIMELINE TOOL

Where is this passage on the Bible timeline? Where am I on the Bible timeline? How do I read this in the light of what has happened in between (e.g. the other side of Jesus)?

Usually the best way to get your bearings when you come to an unfamiliar chapter of the Bible is to get out the **STRUCTURE TOOL**. Try to divide it into sections and think about how they fit together. To help you:

- Most of the chapter is Isaiah talking to the people. But can you find a paragraph that begins and ends with Isaiah talking to God?
- Most of the chapter is Isaiah prophesying about the future. But can you find a paragraph that describes what things are like in his own day (present tense)?
- Can you find contrasts between your sections? Look for what is lifted up and what is squashed down. Look for what Israel foolishly imports from the surrounding nations and what she will gloriously export to them.

Isaiah is writing poetry, and instead of just giving the bare facts, he deliberately engages with our imaginations and our emotions. Use the **TONE AND FEEL TOOL** to explore his use of language and imagery.

- Consider his use of repetition in vv12-16, “against all ... against all ... against all” (ten times!). What impact does this have on the reader? What other examples of repetition can you find?
- Consider his use of imagery in v4b, “they shall beat their swords into ploughshares”. Can you give a modern equivalent? They will bend their AK47s into...? What impact does this have on the reader? What other examples of vivid imagery can you find?

Use the **SO WHAT TOOL?** Can you find two places where Isaiah tells his readers the direct application?

Use the **BIBLE TIMELINE TOOL**. How much of Isaiah’s prophecy has already begun to be fulfilled at Jesus’ first coming? What will happen at Jesus’ second coming?

NOTES

ISAIAH

5:1-30

¹ Let me sing for my beloved
my love song concerning his vineyard:
My beloved had a vineyard
on a very fertile hill.

² He dug it and cleared it of stones,
and planted it with choice vines;
he built a watchtower in the midst of it,
and hewed out a wine vat in it;
and he looked for it to yield grapes,
but it yielded wild grapes.

³ And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem
and men of Judah,
judge between me and my vineyard.

⁴ What more was there to do for my vineyard,
that I have not done in it?
When I looked for it to yield grapes,
why did it yield wild grapes?

⁵ And now I will tell you
what I will do to my vineyard.
I will remove its hedge,
and it shall be devoured;
I will break down its wall,
and it shall be trampled down.

⁶ I will make it a waste;
it shall not be pruned or hoed,
and briars and thorns shall grow up;
I will also command the clouds
that they rain no rain upon it.

⁷ For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts
is the house of Israel,
and the men of Judah
are his pleasant planting;
and he looked for justice,
but behold, bloodshed;
for righteousness,
but behold, an outcry!

⁸ Woe to those who join house to house,
who add field to field,
until there is no more room,
and you are made to dwell alone
in the midst of the land.

⁹ The LORD of hosts has sworn in my hearing:
“Surely many houses shall be desolate,
large and beautiful houses, without inhabitant.

¹⁰ For ten acres of vineyard shall yield but one bath,
and a homer of seed shall yield but an ephah.”

¹¹ Woe to those who rise early in the morning,
that they may run after strong drink,
who tarry late into the evening
as wine inflames them!

¹² They have lyre and harp,
tambourine and flute and wine at their feasts,
but they do not regard the deeds of the LORD,
or see the work of his hands.

¹³ Therefore my people go into exile
for lack of knowledge;
their honored men go hungry,
and their multitude is parched with thirst.

¹⁴ Therefore Sheol has enlarged its appetite
and opened its mouth beyond measure,
and the nobility of Jerusalem and her multitude will go down,
her revelers and he who exults in her.

¹⁵ Man is humbled, and each one is brought low,
and the eyes of the haughty are brought low.

¹⁶ But the LORD of hosts is exalted in justice,
and the Holy God shows himself holy in righteousness.

¹⁷ Then shall the lambs graze as in their pasture,
and nomads shall eat among the ruins of the rich.

¹⁸ Woe to those who draw iniquity with cords of falsehood,
who draw sin as with cart ropes,

¹⁹ who say: “Let him be quick,
let him speed his work
that we may see it;

let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw near,
and let it come, that we may know it!”

²⁰ Woe to those who call evil good
and good evil,
who put darkness for light
and light for darkness,
who put bitter for sweet
and sweet for bitter!

21 Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes,
and shrewd in their own sight!

22 Woe to those who are heroes at drinking wine,
and valiant men in mixing strong drink,

23 who acquit the guilty for a bribe,
and deprive the innocent of his right!

24 Therefore, as the tongue of fire devours the stubble,
and as dry grass sinks down in the flame,
so their root will be as rottenness,
and their blossom go up like dust;
for they have rejected the law of the LORD of hosts,
and have despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.

25 Therefore the anger of the LORD was kindled against his people,
and he stretched out his hand against them and struck them,
and the mountains quaked;
and their corpses were as refuse
in the midst of the streets.
For all this his anger has not turned away,
and his hand is stretched out still.

26 He will raise a signal for nations far away,
and whistle for them from the ends of the earth;
and behold, quickly, speedily they come!

27 None is weary, none stumbles,
none slumbers or sleeps,
not a waistband is loose,
not a sandal strap broken;

28 their arrows are sharp,
all their bows bent,
their horses' hoofs seem like flint,
and their wheels like the whirlwind.

29 Their roaring is like a lion,
like young lions they roar;
they growl and seize their prey;
they carry it off, and none can rescue.

30 They will growl over it on that day,
like the growling of the sea.
And if one looks to the land,
behold, darkness and distress;
and the light is darkened by its clouds.?

PRAY

Praise God that Isaiah 2 has begun to be fulfilled: ever since Jesus was “lifted up” on the cross, the word of God has gone out from Jerusalem and the nations have begun to gather to worship him!

READ

Read the passage a couple of times.



AUTHORS PURPOSE TOOL

The biggest question we can ever ask of a passage in the Bible is simply: why did the author write this?



REPETITION TOOL

Sometimes the author says something more than once to make sure we don't miss it. Sometimes the author says something more than once to make sure we don't miss it.



LINKING WORDS TOOL

Whenever you see a 'therefore' ask what it's there for! And the same goes for words like 'because', 'so that', 'for' etc.



QUOTATION/ ALLUSION TOOL

When the author quotes or alludes to another part of the Bible, we should look it up in its original context to see what ideas he is picking up on

LOOK CLOSELY AT VV1-7

Isaiah sings a song about a vineyard. The punchline comes in v7, but let's use the **AUTHOR'S PURPOSE TOOL** to consider what Isaiah is trying to achieve by the way he has written it:

- Why does Isaiah call it a “love song” (v1)? Who is loving whom? How does that make v7 more tragic?
- How does Isaiah emphasise the owner's lavish provision for the vineyard in v2? How does that make v7 more tragic?
- Why does Isaiah pause his poem to ask questions of his hearers in v4? How would you answer the questions? What does Isaiah achieve by making us answer this in our own heads before he tells us the answer in vv5-6?
- Why does Isaiah save v7 until last? Why doesn't he reveal what his song is all about until he has finished singing it?

LOOK MORE BRIEFLY AT VV8-30

Use the **REPETITION TOOL** and the **LINKING WORDS TOOL** to highlight all of occurrences of “woe” and “therefore”.

- Looking first at the woes, how would you describe the “bad fruit” of God’s vineyard?
- Looking secondly at the therefore, how is God going to destroy the vineyard? Why is this punishment fitting?

Read Mark 12:1-12. Use the **QUOTATION/ALLUSION TOOL**. How does Jesus apply a slightly-altered version of Isaiah’s song to the Jewish leaders of his own day?

NOTES

ISAIAH

6:1-13

¹ In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. ² Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. ³ And one called to another and said:

“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts;
the whole earth is full of his glory!”

⁴ And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. ⁵ And I said: “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!”

⁶ Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. ⁷ And he touched my mouth and said: “Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for.”

⁸ And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” Then I said, “Here I am! Send me.” ⁹ And he said, “Go, and say to this people:

“Keep on hearing, but do not understand;
keep on seeing, but do not perceive.”

¹⁰ Make the heart of this people dull,
and their ears heavy,
and blind their eyes;

lest they see with their eyes,
and hear with their ears,
and understand with their hearts,
and turn and be healed.”

¹¹ Then I said, “How long, O Lord?”
And he said:

“Until cities lie waste
without inhabitant,
and houses without people,
and the land is a desolate waste,

¹² and the LORD removes people far away,

and the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land.

¹³ And though a tenth remain in it,
it will be burned again,
like a terebinth or an oak,
whose stump remains
when it is felled.”

The holy seed is its stump.

PRAY

Pray in response to last week's passage that we wouldn't be ashamed of God's judgment, but that we would see that it's right for him to destroy a vineyard that produces bad fruit.

READ

Read the passage a couple of times.



VOCABULARY TOOL

Bible words have Bible meanings. Be alert in case the author is using a familiar word in an unusual way.



'WHO AM I?' TOOL

With which character (if any) does Isaiah intend us to identify ourselves?



QUOTATION/ ALLUSION TOOL

When the author quotes or alludes to another part of the Bible, we should look it up in its original context to see what ideas he is picking up on

This is one of the most famous chapters in the Bible about the holiness of God. Use the **VOCABULARY TOOL**. Imagine you have no idea what the word "holy" means (and actually we can easily misunderstand Bible words). What do you learn about the concept of God's holiness just from vv1-5?

- Consider the response of the seraphim
- Consider the response of Isaiah

Often Isaiah's commissioning is taken to be normative for how God calls Christians to serve him. But let's pause for a moment before we rush to apply it to ourselves. Use the **'WHO AM I?' TOOL**. In what ways is Isaiah typical of every Christian? In what ways is his ministry unique? Is "Here I am! Send me" something that we can also say, given the particular context?

God's instructions to Isaiah in vv9-13 are very surprising. He is told to "make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes" so that they won't understand his sermons! God intends for his preaching to fail! Use the **QUOTATION/ALLUSION TOOL** to consider how the New Testament writers apply this to the ministry of Jesus and the apostles:

- a) Mark 4:10-12
- b) John 12:36b-43
- c) Acts 28:23-31

Harder: can you think of ways in which this initial rejection is actually essential to God's salvation plan?

NOTES

ISAIAH

9:1-17

¹ But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.

² The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness,
on them has light shone.

³ You have multiplied the nation;
you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you
as with joy at the harvest,
as they are glad when they divide the spoil.

⁴ For the yoke of his burden,
and the staff for his shoulder,
the rod of his oppressor,
you have broken as on the day of Midian.

⁵ For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult
and every garment rolled in blood
will be burned as fuel for the fire.

⁶ For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given;
and the government shall be upon his shoulder,
and his name shall be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

⁷ Of the increase of his government and of peace
there will be no end,
on the throne of David and over his kingdom,
to establish it and to uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time forth and forevermore.
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

PRAY

Pray in response to last week's passage that we would be comforted and humbled by God's Sovereignty, that he "works all things according to the counsel of his will" (Ephesians 1:11)

READ

Read the passage a couple of times.



BIBLE TIMELINE TOOL

Can you mark the various events of Isaiah's prophecy onto a timeline? When is each bit fulfilled?



LINKING WORDS TOOL

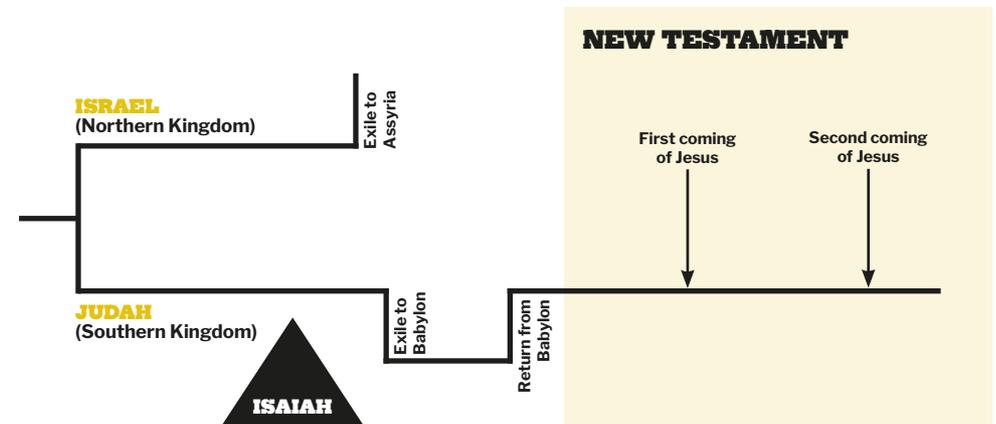
Whenever you see a 'therefore' ask what it's there for! And the same goes for words like 'because', 'so that', 'for' etc.



TONE AND FEEL TOOL

As we come to the Bible, we should not only pay attention to the point that is being made, but also how it is being made. What feelings does the passage evoke?

Use the **BIBLE TIMELINE TOOL** to get your bearings. Can you place the "former time" and the "latter time" of v1 on the timeline below? Hint: Zebulun and Naphtali were the tribes who had their territory right at the top of the Promised Land, in what became the Northern Kingdom of Israel. When did they experience "anguish" and "contempt" (v1)? When did they see a great light? (v2)?



Use the **LINKING WORDS TOOL** to follow the chain of “For” statements and think about the step-by-step logic of the passage. What is the ultimate reason for the people’s change of fortunes?

Use the **TONE AND FEEL TOOL** as you try to engage with the poetry. What imagery does Isaiah use to express a) a glorious future in contrast to a terrible past b) joy c) peace and security d) the glory of the coming King?

NOTES

ISAIAH

11:1-12:6

¹ There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse,
and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.

² And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him,
the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and might,
the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.

³ And his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD.

He shall not judge by what his eyes see,
or decide disputes by what his ears hear,

⁴ but with righteousness he shall judge the poor,
and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;
and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth,
and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.

⁵ Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist,
and faithfulness the belt of his loins.

⁶ The wolf shall dwell with the lamb,
and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat,
and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together;
and a little child shall lead them.

⁷ The cow and the bear shall graze;
their young shall lie down together;
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

⁸ The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra,
and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den.

⁹ They shall not hurt or destroy
in all my holy mountain;
for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD
as the waters cover the sea.

¹⁰ In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples—of him shall the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious.

¹¹ In that day the Lord will extend his hand yet a second time to recover the remnant that remains of his people, from Assyria, from Egypt, from Pathros, from Cush, from Elam, from Shinar, from Hamath, and from the coastlands of the sea.

¹² He will raise a signal for the nations
and will assemble the banished of Israel,
and gather the dispersed of Judah
from the four corners of the earth.

¹³ The jealousy of Ephraim shall depart,
and those who harass Judah shall be cut off;
Ephraim shall not be jealous of Judah,
and Judah shall not harass Ephraim.

¹⁴ But they shall swoop down on the shoulder of the Philistines in the west,
and together they shall plunder the people of the east.
They shall put out their hand against Edom and Moab,
and the Ammonites shall obey them.

¹⁵ And the LORD will utterly destroy
the tongue of the Sea of Egypt,
and will wave his hand over the River
with his scorching breath,

and strike it into seven channels,
and he will lead people across in sandals.

¹⁶ And there will be a highway from Assyria
for the remnant that remains of his people,
as there was for Israel
when they came up from the land of Egypt.

12 ¹ You will say in that day:
“I will give thanks to you, O LORD,
for though you were angry with me,
your anger turned away,
that you might comfort me.

² “Behold, God is my salvation;
I will trust, and will not be afraid;
for the LORD GOD is my strength and my song,
and he has become my salvation.”

³ With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.

⁴ And you will say in that day:
“Give thanks to the LORD,
call upon his name,
make known his deeds among the peoples,
proclaim that his name is exalted.

⁵ “Sing praises to the LORD, for he has done gloriously;
let this be made known in all the earth.

⁶ Shout, and sing for joy, O [female] inhabitant of Zion,
for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.”

PRAY

It's something we usually do at Christmas, but given where we were in Isaiah last time, why not spend time giving thanks for the child that was born, whose "name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (9:6)

READ

Read this week's passage a couple of times.



STRUCTURE TOOL

How has the author broken down his material into sections? How do these sections fit together?



QUOTATION/ ALLUSION TOOL

When the author quotes or alludes to another part of the Bible, we should look it up in its original context to see what ideas he is picking up on



'SO WHAT?' TOOL

How am I being invited to respond? What difference will this make to my life? What difference will this make to our church?

Using the **STRUCTURE TOOL** to divide the passage into 2-3 parts. As you try to decide on where to break it, look out for the author's use of "bookends", where he uses the same idea to top and tail a section (Hint: consider the mentions of "Jesse", "knowledge ... of the LORD", "Assyria", "his [God's] hand"). Having identified your sections, try to summarise the gist of each in a few words.

Here are a few carefully-selected highlights of the storyline of the Bible so far:

CREATION	GOD MAKES THE WORLD AND IT IS GOOD <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Humans exercise dominion over the animals (Genesis 1:28) • Animals are herbivores (Genesis 1:30)
FALL	HUMANS REJECT GOD AND THE WORLD GOES WRONG <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specifically they believe a lie about how to obtain knowledge (3:5)
EXODUS	GOD RESCUES ISRAEL FROM SLAVERY IN A FOREIGN LAND <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He does it "with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm" (Deuteronomy 4:34; 5:15; 11:2 etc.) • As he parts the waters of the Red Sea and they walk across in sandals (Exodus 12:1;14:21-22). • Afterwards the Israelites all sing a song: "The LORD is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation" (Exodus 15:2) • Then Miriam leads the women in a chorus of their own (Exodus 15:20-21) • Then God comes to "dwell in their midst" (e.g. Exodus 25:8) God gives Israel a king

KING	GOD GIVES ISRAEL A KING <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesse's son David (Ruth 4:22) becomes Israel's greatest king (2 Samuel 7) • David's son Solomon is known for his God-given "wisdom and understanding" (1 Kings 4:29)
DIVIDED KINGDOM	THE KINGDOM IS DIVIDED <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The northern tribes ("Ephraim") break away from the southern tribes ("Judah") and there is often animosity between them (1 Kings 12)
ISAIAH PROPHECIES HERE	
EXILE	GOD'S PEOPLE WILL BE TAKEN INTO CAPTIVITY BECAUSE OF THEIR SIN <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God has announced "my people go into exile for lack of knowledge" (Isaiah 5:13) and tells Isaiah to keep prophesying until "the LORD removes people far away" (Isaiah 6:12)
RETURN	THERE IS HOPE BEYOND THE COMING ISRAEL <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The "in that day" of our passage (11:10, 11; 12:1, 4) looks forward to a future deliverance

Use the **QUOTATION/ALLUSION TOOL**. How does Isaiah's language in our passage deliberately echo earlier parts of the story? What is going to happen again? What is going to be restored? What is going to be reversed?

Use the **SO WHAT?! TOOL** to identify the application that Isaiah has in mind. The quick answer is "he wants us to praise God", but can you be more specific? How exactly?

NOTES

ISAIAH

35:1-10

and come to Zion with singing;
everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;
they shall obtain gladness and joy,
and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

- ¹ The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad;
the desert shall rejoice and blossom like the crocus;
² it shall blossom abundantly
and rejoice with joy and singing.
The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it,
the majesty of Carmel and Sharon.
They shall see the glory of the LORD,
the majesty of our God.
- ³ Strengthen the weak hands,
and make firm the feeble knees.
- ⁴ Say to those who have an anxious heart,
“Be strong; fear not!
Behold, your God
will come with vengeance,
with the recompense of God.
He will come and save you.”
- ⁵ Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
and the ears of the deaf unstopped;
⁶ then shall the lame man leap like a deer,
and the tongue of the mute sing for joy.
For waters break forth in the wilderness,
and streams in the desert;
- ⁷ the burning sand shall become a pool,
and the thirsty ground springs of water;
in the haunt of jackals, where they lie down,
the grass shall become reeds and rushes.
- ⁸ And a highway shall be there,
and it shall be called the Way of Holiness;
the unclean shall not pass over it.
It shall belong to those who walk on the way;
even if they are fools, they shall not go astray.
- ⁹ No lion shall be there,
nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it;
they shall not be found there,
but the redeemed shall walk there.
- ¹⁰ And the ransomed of the LORD shall return

PRAY

Pray for the members of your group to be bold in reaching out to friends, family, neighbours, colleagues with the gospel.

READ

Read this week's passage a couple of times.



AUTHORS PURPOSE TOOL

The biggest question we can ever ask of a passage in the Bible is simply: why did the author write this?



CONTEXT TOOL

Words come within sentences, sentences in paragraphs, paragraphs in chapters, chapters in sections.... If you take a text out of context you're left with a con.

At first glance, we might assume that Isaiah is describing Zion, the glorious destination awaiting God's rescued people (as he has done before, e.g. 2:1-5). But look closer. What clues can you find that he's actually describing the journey to Zion rather than Zion itself?

Use the **AUTHOR'S PURPOSE TOOL**. Why might it be important for Isaiah to tell his readers about the journey to Zion? To help you, look for what the prophet wants them to do in response (i.e. when he gives a direct instruction).

Use the **CONTEXT TOOL** to remind yourself of what Isaiah said about seeing and hearing back in 6:9-12. How does that change the way you read v5 in this week's chapter?

- What does this mean in terms of judgment and salvation?
- How does the great encouragement of v5 help to achieve the prophet's purpose that you identified above?

As you consider how all of this applies to us, who live on the other side of Jesus' death and resurrection, read Hebrew 12:12-13 in the New Testament.

- Where are these words taken from?
- So what does God want us to know about the journey we are on? And what does he want us to do?

NOTES

ISAIAH

36:1-37:38

¹ In the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and took them. ² And the king of Assyria sent the Rabshakeh from Lachish to King Hezekiah at Jerusalem, with a great army. And he stood by the conduit of the upper pool on the highway to the Washer's Field. ³ And there came out to him Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, who was over the household, and Shebna the secretary, and Joah the son of Asaph, the recorder.

⁴ And the Rabshakeh said to them, "Say to Hezekiah, 'Thus says the great king, the king of Assyria: On what do you rest this trust of yours?' ⁵ Do you think that mere words are strategy and power for war? In whom do you now trust, that you have rebelled against me? ⁶ Behold, you are trusting in Egypt, that broken reed of a staff, which will pierce the hand of any man who leans on it. Such is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who trust in him. ⁷ But if you say to me, 'We trust in the LORD our God,' is it not he whose high places and altars Hezekiah has removed, saying to Judah and to Jerusalem, 'You shall worship before this altar'?" ⁸ Come now, make a wager with my master the king of Assyria: I will give you two thousand horses, if you are able on your part to set riders on them. ⁹ How then can you repulse a single captain among the least of my master's servants, when you trust in Egypt for chariots and for horsemen? ¹⁰ Moreover, is it without the LORD that I have come up against this land to destroy it? The LORD said to me, "Go up against this land and destroy it.""

¹¹ Then Eliakim, Shebna, and Joah said to the Rabshakeh, "Please speak to your servants in Aramaic, for we understand it. Do not speak to us in the language of Judah within the hearing of the people who are on the wall." ¹² But the Rabshakeh said, "Has my master sent me to speak these words to your master and to you, and not to the men sitting on the wall, who are doomed with you to eat their own dung and drink their own urine?"

¹³ Then the Rabshakeh stood and called out in a loud voice in the language of Judah: "Hear the words of the great king, the king of Assyria! ¹⁴ Thus says the king: 'Do not let Hezekiah deceive you, for he will not be able to deliver you. ¹⁵ Do not let Hezekiah make you trust in the LORD by saying, 'The LORD will surely deliver us. This city will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.'" ¹⁶ Do not listen to Hezekiah. For thus says the king of Assyria: Make your peace with me and come out to me. Then each one of you will eat of his own vine, and each one of his own fig tree, and each one of you will drink the water of his own cistern, ¹⁷ until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of grain and wine, a land of bread and vineyards. ¹⁸ Beware lest Hezekiah mislead you by saying, 'The LORD will deliver us.' Has any of the gods

of the nations delivered his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria? ¹⁹ Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim? Have they delivered Samaria out of my hand? ²⁰ Who among all the gods of these lands have delivered their lands out of my hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?"

²¹ But they were silent and answered him not a word, for the king's command was, "Do not answer him." ²² Then Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, who was over the household, and Shebna the secretary, and Joah the son of Asaph, the recorder, came to Hezekiah with their clothes torn, and told him the words of the Rabshakeh.

37 ¹ As soon as King Hezekiah heard it, he tore his clothes and covered himself with sackcloth and went into the house of the LORD. ² And he sent Eliakim, who was over the household, and Shebna the secretary, and the senior priests, covered with sackcloth, to the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz. ³ They said to him, "Thus says Hezekiah, 'This day is a day of distress, of rebuke, and of disgrace; children have come to the point of birth, and there is no strength to bring them forth. ⁴ It may be that the LORD your God will hear the words of the Rabshakeh, whom his master the king of Assyria has sent to mock the living God, and will rebuke the words that the LORD your God has heard; therefore lift up your prayer for the remnant that is left.'"

⁵ When the servants of King Hezekiah came to Isaiah, ⁶ Isaiah said to them, "Say to your master, 'Thus says the LORD: Do not be afraid because of the words that you have heard, with which the young men of the king of Assyria have reviled me. ⁷ Behold, I will put a spirit in him, so that he shall hear a rumor and return to his own land, and I will make him fall by the sword in his own land.'"

⁸ The Rabshakeh returned, and found the king of Assyria fighting against Libnah, for he had heard that the king had left Lachish. ⁹ Now the king heard concerning Tirhakah king of Cush, "He has set out to fight against you." And when he heard it, he sent messengers to Hezekiah, saying, ¹⁰ "Thus shall you speak to Hezekiah king of Judah: 'Do not let your God in whom you trust deceive you by promising that Jerusalem will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria. ¹¹ Behold, you have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands, devoting them to destruction. And shall you be delivered? ¹² Have the gods of the nations delivered them, the nations that my fathers destroyed, Gozan, Haran, Rezeph, and the people of Eden who were in Telassar? ¹³ Where is the king of Hamath, the king of Arpad, the king of the city of Sepharvaim, the king of Hena, or the king of Ivvah?'"

¹⁴ Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers, and read it; and Hezekiah went up to the house of the LORD, and spread it before the LORD. ¹⁵ And Hezekiah prayed to the LORD: ¹⁶ "O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, enthroned above the cherubim, you are the God, you alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; you have made heaven and earth. ¹⁷ Incline your ear, O LORD, and hear; open your eyes, O LORD, and see; and hear all the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to mock the living God. ¹⁸ Truly, O LORD, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the nations and their lands, ¹⁹ and have cast their gods into the fire. For they were no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood

and stone. Therefore they were destroyed. ²⁰ So now, O LORD our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you alone are the LORD.”

²¹ Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent to Hezekiah, saying, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Because you have prayed to me concerning Sennacherib king of Assyria, ²² this is the word that the LORD has spoken concerning him:

“She despises you, she scorns you—
the virgin daughter of Zion;
she wags her head behind you—
the daughter of Jerusalem.

²³ “Whom have you mocked and reviled?
Against whom have you raised your voice
and lifted your eyes to the heights?
Against the Holy One of Israel!

²⁴ By your servants you have mocked the Lord,
and you have said, With my many chariots
I have gone up the heights of the mountains,
to the far recesses of Lebanon,
to cut down its tallest cedars,
its choicest cypresses,
to come to its remotest height,
its most fruitful forest.

²⁵ I dug wells
and drank waters,
to dry up with the sole of my foot
all the streams of Egypt.

²⁶ “Have you not heard
that I determined it long ago?
I planned from days of old
what now I bring to pass,
that you should make fortified cities
crash into heaps of ruins,

²⁷ while their inhabitants, shorn of strength,
are dismayed and confounded,
and have become like plants of the field
and like tender grass,
like grass on the housetops,
blighted before it is grown.

²⁸ “I know your sitting down
and your going out and coming in,
and your raging against me.

²⁹ Because you have raged against me
and your complacency has come to my ears,
I will put my hook in your nose

and my bit in your mouth,
and I will turn you back on the way
by which you came.’

³⁰ “And this shall be the sign for you: this year you shall eat what grows of itself, and in the second year what springs from that. Then in the third year sow and reap, and plant vineyards, and eat their fruit. ³¹ And the surviving remnant of the house of Judah shall again take root downward and bear fruit upward. ³² For out of Jerusalem shall go a remnant, and out of Mount Zion a band of survivors. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

³³ “Therefore thus says the LORD concerning the king of Assyria: He shall not come into this city or shoot an arrow there or come before it with a shield or cast up a siege mound against it. ³⁴ By the way that he came, by the same he shall return, and he shall not come into this city, declares the LORD. ³⁵ For I will defend this city to save it, for my own sake and for the sake of my servant David.”

³⁶ And the angel of the LORD went out and struck down ^{185,000} in the camp of the Assyrians. And when people arose early in the morning, behold, these were all dead bodies. ³⁷ Then Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and returned home and lived at Nineveh. ³⁸ And as he was worshiping in the house of Nisroch his god, Adrammelech and Sharezer, his sons, struck him down with the sword. And after they escaped into the land of Ararat, Esarhaddon his son reigned in his place.

PRAY

Pray for the members of your group to be bold in reaching out to friends, family, neighbours, colleagues with the gospel.

READ

Read this week's passage a couple of times.



STRUCTURE TOOL

How has the author broken down his material into sections? How do these sections fit together?



REPETITION TOOL

Sometimes the author says something more than once to make sure we don't miss it. Sometimes the author says something more than once to make sure we don't miss it.



AUTHORS PURPOSE TOOL

The biggest question we can ever ask of a passage in the Bible is simply: why did the author write this?



'WHO AM I?' FEEL TOOL

With which character (if any) does Isaiah intend us to identify ourselves?

Use the **STRUCTURE TOOL** to consider the shape of the story. We've colour-coded the different sections, and used italics for the introduction and conclusion:

Can you give a summary of each section in three or four words?

Can you find two cycles, where everything goes round twice?

Why do you think this is?

Can you find any progression between the two cycles?

Use the **REPETITION TOOL** to help you find the central themes of the Rabshakeh's taunt and Hezekiah's response.

Use the **AUTHOR'S PURPOSE TOOL**. Why might this passage help the people of God when they feel as if everything is against them?

Use the **'WHO AM I?' TOOL** (harder). Do you think that God intends us to:

a) identify Hezekiah with ourselves (so that he functions primarily as a model for believers under pressure)?

b) identify Hezekiah, the king in the line of David, with another king who was to come (so that he functions primarily as a type of the ultimate Messiah)?

c) both of the above?

NOTES

ISAIAH

40

¹ Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.

² Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,
and cry to her
that her warfare is ended,
that her iniquity is pardoned,
that she has received from the LORD's hand
double for all her sins.

³ A voice cries:

“In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD;
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

⁴ Every valley shall be lifted up,
and every mountain and hill be made low;
the uneven ground shall become level,
and the rough places a plain.

⁵ And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,
and all flesh shall see it together,
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”

⁶ A voice says, “Cry!”

And I said, “What shall I cry?”
All flesh is grass,
and all its beauty is like the flower of the field.

⁷ The grass withers, the flower fades
when the breath of the LORD blows on it;
surely the people are grass.

⁸ The grass withers, the flower fades,
but the word of our God will stand forever.

⁹ Go on up to a high mountain,
O Zion, herald of good news;
lift up your voice with strength,
O Jerusalem, herald of good news;
lift it up, fear not;
say to the cities of Judah,
“Behold your God!”

¹⁰ Behold, the Lord GOD comes with might,
and his arm rules for him;
behold, his reward is with him,
and his recompense before him.

¹¹ He will tend his flock like a shepherd;
he will gather the lambs in his arms;
he will carry them in his bosom,
and gently lead those that are with young.

¹² Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand
and marked off the heavens with a span,
enclosed the dust of the earth in a measure
and weighed the mountains in scales
and the hills in a balance?

¹³ Who has measured the Spirit of the LORD,
or what man shows him his counsel?

¹⁴ Whom did he consult,
and who made him understand?
Who taught him the path of justice,
and taught him knowledge,
and showed him the way of understanding?

¹⁵ Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket,
and are accounted as the dust on the scales;
behold, he takes up the coastlands like fine dust.

¹⁶ Lebanon would not suffice for fuel,
nor are its beasts enough for a burnt offering.

¹⁷ All the nations are as nothing before him,
they are accounted by him as less than nothing and emptiness.

¹⁸ To whom then will you liken God,
or what likeness compare with him?

¹⁹ An idol! A craftsman casts it,
and a goldsmith overlays it with gold
and casts for it silver chains.

²⁰ He who is too impoverished for an offering
chooses wood that will not rot;
he seeks out a skillful craftsman
to set up an idol that will not move.

²¹ Do you not know? Do you not hear?
Has it not been told you from the beginning?
Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?

²² It is he who sits above the circle of the earth,
and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers;
who stretches out the heavens like a curtain,

and spreads them like a tent to dwell in;
²³ who brings princes to nothing,
 and makes the rulers of the earth as emptiness.
²⁴ Scarcely are they planted, scarcely sown,
 scarcely has their stem taken root in the earth,
 when he blows on them, and they wither,
 and the tempest carries them off like stubble.

²⁵ To whom then will you compare me,
 that I should be like him? says the Holy One.

²⁶ Lift up your eyes on high and see:
 who created these?

He who brings out their host by number,
 calling them all by name;
 by the greatness of his might,
 and because he is strong in power,
 not one is missing.

²⁷ Why do you say, O Jacob,
 and speak, O Israel,

“My way is hidden from the LORD,
 and my right is disregarded by my God”?

²⁸ Have you not known? Have you not heard?
 The LORD is the everlasting God,
 the Creator of the ends of the earth.

He does not faint or grow weary;
 his understanding is unsearchable.

²⁹ He gives power to the faint,
 and to him who has no might he increases strength.

³⁰ Even youths shall faint and be weary,
 and young men shall fall exhausted;

³¹ but they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength;
 they shall mount up with wings like eagles;
 they shall run and not be weary;
 they shall walk and not faint

PRAY

Pray for the members of your group to be bold in reaching out to friends, family, neighbours, colleagues with the gospel.

READ

Read the passage a couple of times.



BIBLE TIMELINE TOOL

Can you mark the various events of Isaiah's prophecy onto a timeline? When is each bit fulfilled?



STRUCTURE TOOL

How has the author broken down his material into sections? How do these sections fit together?



TONE AND FEEL TOOL

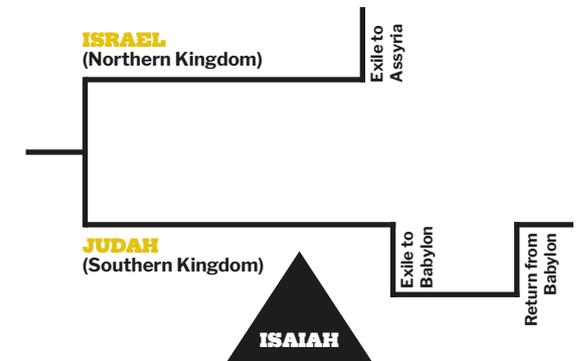
As we come to the Bible, we should not only pay attention to the point that is being made, but also how it is being made. What feelings does the passage evoke?



QUOTATION/ ALLUSION TOOL

When the author quotes or alludes to another part of the Bible, we should look it up in its original context to see what ideas he is picking up on

Use the **BIBLE TIMELINE TOOL** to get your bearings. Being a prophet, Isaiah often says things before they happen. Where would you place the events of chapter 40 and why?



Use the **STRUCTURE TOOL** to divide the passage into 2-3 big sections (it would be easier to divide it into lots of tiny sections, but that's less help when we try to put it back together). Can you give each section a title?

Isaiah is bringing a message of “comfort” (v1). Use the **TONE AND FEEL TOOL** to think about how he makes it so comforting. Think about:

- a) his choice of images and metaphors. God is like...
- b) his use of questions. What effect do these have?
- c) his use of contrasts (e.g. v8, v30-31)

Use the **QUOTATION/ALLUSION TOOL** to think about how Isaiah 40 is fulfilled according to a) Mark 1:1-11 b) 1 Peter 1:22-25

NOTES

ISAIAH

42:1-4, 49:1-6, 50:4-9

FIRST SERVANT SONG

- ¹ Behold my servant, whom I uphold,
my chosen, in whom my soul delights;
I have put my Spirit upon him;
he will bring forth justice to the nations.
- ² He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice,
or make it heard in the street;
- ³ a bruised reed he will not break,
and a faintly burning wick he will not quench;
he will faithfully bring forth justice.
- ⁴ He will not grow faint or be discouraged
till he has established justice in the earth;
and the coastlands wait for his law.

SECOND SERVANT SONG

- ¹ Listen to me, O coastlands,
and give attention, you peoples from afar.
The LORD called me from the womb,
from the body of my mother he named my name.
- ² He made my mouth like a sharp sword;
in the shadow of his hand he hid me;
he made me a polished arrow;
in his quiver he hid me away.
- ³ And he said to me, “You are my servant,
Israel, in whom I will be glorified.”
- ⁴ But I said, “I have labored in vain;
I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity;
yet surely my right is with the LORD,
and my recompense with my God.”
- ⁵ And now the LORD says,
he who formed me from the womb to be his servant,
to bring Jacob back to him;

and that Israel might be gathered to him—
for I am honored in the eyes of the LORD,
and my God has become my strength—

⁶ he says:

“It is too light a thing that you should be my servant
to raise up the tribes of Jacob
and to bring back the preserved of Israel;
I will make you as a light for the nations,
that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”

THIRD SERVANT SONG

- ⁴ The Lord GOD has given me
the tongue of those who are taught,
that I may know how to sustain with a word
him who is weary.
Morning by morning he awakens;
he awakens my ear
to hear as those who are taught.
- ⁵ The Lord GOD has opened my ear,
and I was not rebellious;
I turned not backward.
- ⁶ I gave my back to those who strike,
and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard;
I hid not my face
from disgrace and spitting.
- ⁷ But the Lord GOD helps me;
therefore I have not been disgraced;
therefore I have set my face like a flint,
and I know that I shall not be put to shame.
- ⁸ He who vindicates me is near.
Who will contend with me?
Let us stand up together.
Who is my adversary?
Let him come near to me.
- ⁹ Behold, the Lord GOD helps me;
who will declare me guilty?
Behold, all of them will wear out like a garment;
the moth will eat them up.

PRAY

Pray for the members of your group to be bold in reaching out to friends, family, neighbours, colleagues with the gospel.

READ

Read the passage a couple of times.



CONTEXT TOOL

Words come within sentences, sentences in paragraphs, paragraphs in chapters, chapters in sections.... If you take a text out of context you're left with a con.



VOCABULARY TOOL

Bible words have Bible meanings. Be alert in case the author is using a familiar word in an unusual way.



TONE AND FEEL TOOL

As we come to the Bible, we should not only pay attention to the point that is being made, but also how it is being made. What feelings does the passage evoke?

Use the **CONTEXT TOOL** to help you work out where we have seen this “servant” before. What does he have in common with the figure that we met back in

a) 9:6-7?

b) 11:1-5?

Use the **VOCABULARY TOOL** to think carefully about the difference references to “Israel” in the second song. To whom does it refer? Can you find two very different answers? What is the connection between the two Israel's?

Use the **TONE AND FEEL TOOL**. What is so beautiful about the character of this servant? What do you love about him?

NOTES

ISAIAH

52:13-53:12

¹³ Behold, my servant shall act wisely;
he shall be high and lifted up,
and shall be exalted.

¹⁴ As many were astonished at you—
his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance,
and his form beyond that of the children of mankind—

¹⁵ so shall he sprinkle many nations.
Kings shall shut their mouths because of him,
for that which has not been told them they see,
and that which they have not heard they understand.

53 ¹ Who has believed what he has heard from us?
And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

² For he grew up before him like a young plant,
and like a root out of dry ground;
he had no form or majesty that we should look at him,
and no beauty that we should desire him.

³ He was despised and rejected by men,
a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;
and as one from whom men hide their faces
he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

⁴ Surely he has borne our griefs
and carried our sorrows;
yet we esteemed him stricken,
smitten by God, and afflicted.

⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions;
he was crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,
and with his wounds we are healed.

⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray;
we have turned—every one—to his own way;
and the LORD has laid on him
the iniquity of us all.

⁷ He was oppressed, and he was afflicted,
yet he opened not his mouth;

like a lamb that is led to the slaughter,
and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent,
so he opened not his mouth.

⁸ By oppression and judgment he was taken away;
and as for his generation, who considered
that he was cut off out of the land of the living,
stricken for the transgression of my people?

⁹ And they made his grave with the wicked
and with a rich man in his death,
although he had done no violence,
and there was no deceit in his mouth.

¹⁰ Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him;
he has put him to grief;
when his soul makes an offering for guilt,
he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days;
the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.

¹¹ Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied;
by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant,
make many to be accounted righteous,
and he shall bear their iniquities.

¹² Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many,
and he shall divide the spoil with the strong,
because he poured out his soul to death
and was numbered with the transgressors;
yet he bore the sin of many,
and makes intercession for the transgressors.

PRAY

Pray for the members of your group to be bold in reaching out to friends, family, neighbours, colleagues with the gospel.

READ

Read the passage a couple of times.



STRUCTURE TOOL

How has the author broken down his material into sections? How do these sections fit together?



QUOTATION/ ALLUSION TOOL

When the author quotes or alludes to another part of the Bible, we should look it up in its original context to see what ideas he is picking up on

Use the **STRUCTURE TOOL** to think about how the five paragraphs of the song fit together. Can you find any kind of progression between them?

- How does the tone change through the chapter? Happy or sad?
- What paradoxes are created and then solved? Where is there confusion and where is there praise?

In this chapter, perhaps the most important words are the personal pronouns: I, my, we, us, our, you, your, he, him, his, they. They are confusing at first, because whom they refer to keeps changing depending on whom is speaking. For example:

“Behold my [God’s] servant” (52:13)

- God is speaking to us about the servant

“Many were astonished at you [the Servant]” (52:14a)

- God/Isaiah is talking to the servant

“Who has believed what he heard from us? [Isaiah]” (53:1)

- Isaiah is talking to us about himself

It sounds complicated, but there’s actually treasure here. Go through with a highlighter, with one colour for Isaiah and us, one colour for the servant and one colour for God, and highlight all of the personal pronouns. What patterns do you uncover?

Use the **QUOTATION/ALLUSION TOOL** to meditate on some of the ways that this chapter is fulfilled in the New Testament:

- Mark 14:53-65; 15:1-4
- 1 Peter 2:21-25
- John 12:37-38

NOTES

ISAIAH

55

¹ “Come, everyone who thirsts,
come to the waters;
and he who has no money,
come, buy and eat!
Come, buy wine and milk
without money and without price.
² Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread,
and your labor for that which does not satisfy?
Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good,
and delight yourselves in rich food.
³ Incline your ear, and come to me;
hear, that your soul may live;
and I will make with you an everlasting covenant,
my steadfast, sure love for David.
⁴ Behold, I made him a witness to the peoples,
a leader and commander for the peoples.
⁵ Behold, you shall call a nation that you do not know,
and a nation that did not know you shall run to you,
because of the LORD your God, and of the Holy One of Israel,
for he has glorified you.
⁶ “Seek the LORD while he may be found;
call upon him while he is near;
⁷ let the wicked forsake his way,
and the unrighteous man his thoughts;
let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion on him,
and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.
⁸ For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD.
⁹ For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.
¹⁰ “For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven
and do not return there but water the earth,
making it bring forth and sprout,
giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,
¹¹ so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;

it shall not return to me empty,
but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,
and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.
¹² “For you shall go out in joy
and be led forth in peace;
the mountains and the hills before you
shall break forth into singing,
and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.
¹³ Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress;
instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle;
and it shall make a name for the LORD,
an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.”

PRAY

Pray for the members of your group to be bold in reaching out to friends, family, neighbours, colleagues with the gospel.

READ

Read the passage a couple of times.



'SO WHAT?' TOOL

How am I being invited to respond? What difference will this make to my life? What difference will this make to our church?



CONTEXT TOOL

Words come within sentences, sentences in paragraphs, paragraphs in chapters, chapters in sections.... If you take a text out of context you're left with a con.



LINKING WORDS TOOL

Whenever you see a 'therefore' ask what it's there for! And the same goes for words like 'because', 'so that', 'for' etc.

Isaiah has been describing how God will rescue his people (chapter 40) through the suffering of his servant (chapter 53). In this chapter he calls for a response. Use the **'SO WHAT?' TOOL**:

- Highlight all of the direct imperatives/instructions (some of them come more than once).
- Can you summarise the invitation according to vv1-3?
- Can you find a different emphasis when the invitation comes again in vv6-9?

In v3, God talks about his "sure love for David", the most celebrated king in Israel's history. Use the **CONTEXT TOOL**. Can you think of other places in Isaiah where the good of the people is bound up with God's promises to a future king?

In addition to giving instructions, Isaiah gives some motivations or reasons. Use the **LINKING WORDS TOOL** to highlight each of the "for" statements. Can you explain how each gives a reason for what comes before?

NOTES

ISAIAH

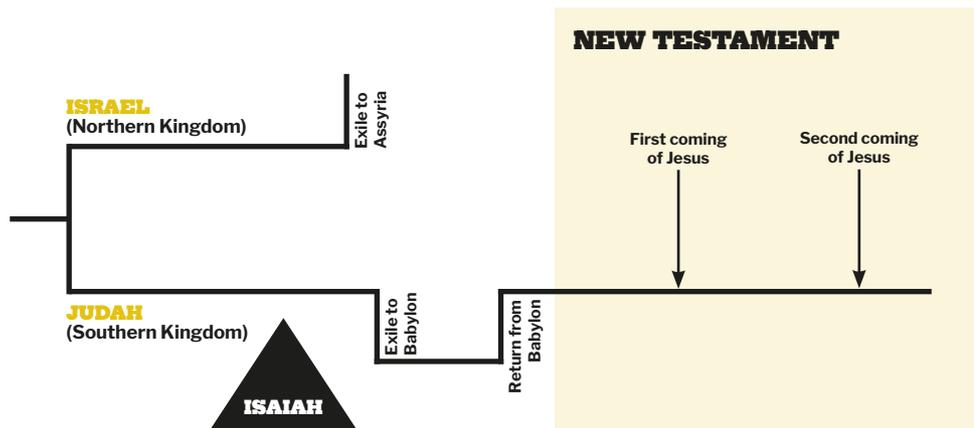
61:1-4

¹ 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;
² to proclaim the year of the LORD's favour,
and the day of vengeance of our God;
to comfort all who mourn;
³ to grant to those who mourn in Zion—
to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit;
that they may be called oaks of righteousness,
the planting of the LORD, that he may be glorified.
⁴ They shall build up the ancient ruins;
they shall raise up the former devastations;
they shall repair the ruined cities,
the devastations of many generations.

ISAIAH

63:1-6

¹ Who is this who comes from Edom,
in crimsoned garments from Bozrah,
he who is splendid in his apparel,
marching in the greatness of his strength?
“It is I, speaking in righteousness,
mighty to save.”
² Why is your apparel red,
and your garments like his who treads in the winepress?
³ “I have trodden the winepress alone,
and from the peoples no one was with me;
I trod them in my anger
and trampled them in my wrath;
their lifeblood spattered on my garments,
and stained all my apparel.
⁴ For the day of vengeance was in my heart,
and my year of redemption had come.
⁵ I looked, but there was no one to help;
I was appalled, but there was no one to uphold;
so my own arm brought me salvation,
and my wrath upheld me.
⁶ I trampled down the peoples in my anger;
I made them drunk in my wrath,
and I poured out their lifeblood on the earth.”



Each of the chapters focusses on a central character. Use the **CONTEXT TOOL** to work out who it is:

Read Isaiah 61:1-3 in the context of 42:1 or 11:1-2 (passages we looked at earlier in Grace Groups). How can you tell they are about the same person? Who is he?

Read Isaiah 63:1-6 in the context of 59:15-19. How can you tell they're about the same person? Who is he?

Use the **TONE AND FEEL TOOL** to consider the tone of each chapter. On first glance it looks like one is joyful and one is terrible – but when we look closer we discover that both are joyful. Why?

Use the **BIBLE TIMELINE TOOL** to look at how these passages are/ will be fulfilled according to a) Luke 4:16-21 b) Revelation 19:11-16. Can you mark the fulfillments of Isaiah's prophecies on the timeline over the page?

PRAY

Pray for the members of your group to be bold in reaching out to friends, family, neighbours, colleagues with the gospel.

READ

Read the passage a couple of times.



CONTEXT TOOL

Words come within sentences, sentences in paragraphs, paragraphs in chapters, chapters in sections.... If you take a text out of context you're left with a con.



TONE AND FEEL TOOL

As we come to the Bible, we should not only pay attention to the point that is being made, but also how it is being made. What feelings does the passage evoke?



BIBLE TIMELINE TOOL

Can you mark the various events of Isaiah's prophecy onto a timeline? When is each bit fulfilled?

Use the **CONTEXT TOOL** to think about how the two prophecies of 61:1-4 and 63:1-16 belong together. Can you find the link between them (it's obvious when you see it)? What idea introduced briefly in chapter 61 is expanded in chapter 63?

NOTES

ISAIAH

65:17-25

- ¹ “For behold, I create new heavens
and a new earth,
and the former things shall not be remembered
or come into mind.
- ¹⁸ But be glad and rejoice forever
in that which I create;
for behold, I create Jerusalem to be a joy,
and her people to be a gladness.
- ¹⁹ I will rejoice in Jerusalem
and be glad in my people;
no more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping
and the cry of distress.
- ²⁰ No more shall there be in it
an infant who lives but a few days,
or an old man who does not fill out his days,
for the young man shall die a hundred years old,
and the sinner a hundred years old shall be accursed.
- ²¹ They shall build houses and inhabit them;
they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit.
- ²² They shall not build and another inhabit;
they shall not plant and another eat;
for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be,
and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands.
- ²³ They shall not labor in vain
or bear children for calamity,
for they shall be the offspring of the blessed of the LORD,
and their descendants with them.
- ²⁴ Before they call I will answer;
while they are yet speaking I will hear.
- ²⁵ The wolf and the lamb shall graze together;
the lion shall eat straw like the ox,
and dust shall be the serpent’s food.
They shall not hurt or destroy
in all my holy mountain,”
says the LORD.

PRAY

Pray that there would be opportunities to water the seed that was sown.

READ

Read the passage a couple of times.



TONE AND FEEL TOOL

As we come to the Bible, we should not only pay attention to the point that is being made, but also how it is being made. What feelings does the passage evoke?



QUOTATION/ ALLUSION TOOL

When the author quotes or alludes to another part of the Bible, we should look it up in its original context to see what ideas he is picking up on



AUTHORS PURPOSE TOOL

The biggest question we can ever ask of a passage in the Bible is simply: why did the author write this?

Use the **TONE AND FEEL TOOL** to consider the picture that Isaiah paints of a glorious future.

- Can you make a list of the images he uses? What different aspect of blessing is captured by each one?
- Why is it important to know that he is speaking poetically and not predicting the future absolutely literally? How would you argue that from the Bible (or even from Isaiah itself)?

Use the **QUOTATION/ALLUSION TOOL** to compare this passage with the curses that God pronounced in Genesis 3:14-19 at the beginning of human history. Which curses are reversed and which are enacted?

Use the **AUTHOR'S PURPOSE TOOL**. You've thought already about what Isaiah says, but why does he say it? His first readers' short term future is looking grim – they are about to go into exile. Why is helpful for them to know their glorious long term future? How will this safeguard them?

- Read Revelation 21:1-8. Why is it helpful for us to know our long term future? How will it safeguard us?

NOTES