

Isaiah Chapters 40 through 66

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Main themes: The Plan of God; The Servant of God; The Day of YHWH; Second Exodus; New Israel; The World Tomorrow; The Kingdom of God

High Level Outline:

40: Introduction

41: - 48: The Plan of God Unfolds

49: - 56:8: The Work of the Servant of God

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Detailed Contents:

Introduction

40:1-11 A thumbnail sketch of the plan of God from the destruction of ancient Israel through the establishment of the Kingdom of God

40:12-17, 25-26 The greatness of God with respect to the creation and the nations of this world

40:18-20 The greatness of God with respect to idols – the ways of this world

40:21-24 The greatness of God with respect to history – the accomplishments of humanity

40:27-31 The greatness of God with respect to Israel – failed but not forgotten by God

The Plan of God Unfolds

41:1-7 A challenge to the nations and their idols

41:8-20 Israel remains God's servant – through the second exodus and the establishment of the New Israel, God will accomplish his purpose for Israel

41:21-29 The futility of idols contrasted with God's total control of history

42:1-9 The First Servant Song: The calling/commissioning of the Servant

42:10-17 The King of Kings (YHWH in his new role as returning Messiah) establishing universal peace in the World Tomorrow

42:18-25 The failure of ancient Israel as the Servant of God

43:1-7 The big picture: Old Testament Israel (a physical nation), New Testament Israel (the Church, a spiritual nation), New Israel (a converted, spiritual, and physical nation)

43:8-15 Israel, always God's servant, witnesses to his plan – even through the destruction of the physical nation

43:16-21 The first exodus is rendered into insignificance by the second exodus

43:22-28 The situation/condition of Israel as Isaiah wrote this

44:1-8, 21-27 New Israel in the World Tomorrow – truly God's servant

44:9-20 The folly of idolatry: a condemnation of the practices fostered by Manasseh

44:28 – 45:13 Explicit prophecy of Cyrus – a minor player in God's plan; God explicitly mentions Cyrus by name to demonstrate that he has 'declared it from the beginning' (41:26)

45:14-25 God will fully carry out his plan through the New Israel – 'every knee shall bow; every tongue shall swear allegiance' to God

46:1-2, 5-7 Idols of Babylon are specified as typical of all idols – they are of no value compared to God

46:2-3, 8-13 Israel remains integral to God's plan – God will accomplish his plan; 'remnant' (v3) encompasses the whole concept of 'the remnant': God would not accomplish his plan through the nation of Israel, but through a remnant of the nation

47:1-15 The judgement of Babylon: note the a-temporal shifting – God has just prophesied Cyrus (~150 years in the future) now, without any differentiation, Babylon is considered (~75 years in the future); the allusions here generally apply to ancient Babylon, but some of them more to end-time Babylon

48:1-11 In spite of Israel's failure, God will accomplish his plan for his own sake

48:12-22 God's plan: as sure as he is creator, he will do it – the remnant community will be established; salvation will be inaugurated through the Messiah; the New Israel will bring salvation to the world

The Work of the Servant of God

49:1-7 The Second Servant Song: The commission/mission of the Servant

49:8-26 The second exodus and the New Israel; note the connection between v6 and v8: the servant is to bring salvation to all the world, but it will only happen when New Israel (the Church in the World Tomorrow) is established as the servant

50:1-3 YHWH speaks to Israel regarding the condition of the people when he first comes as Messiah

50:4-9 The Third Servant Song: Individual responsibility of those who comprise the servant – exemplified by Christ, the Messiah, the Head of the Servant, the Head of the Church

50:10-11 Calling to the Church (the servant): many are called, true repentance is required, those who apostasies await a bitter fate

51: The head of the Servant (YHWH) speaks comfortingly to the body of the servant (converted individuals from the time of Isaiah, through the first coming of the Messiah, through the New Testament church period, and into the Messianic Age – the World Tomorrow)

51:1-3 Establishes to whom YHWH is speaking

51:4-8 Establishes the focus – the World Tomorrow, the objective of God's plan when salvation is made available to all people

51:9-11 Isaiah interjects with praise: alluding to the two greatest salvific events – the first exodus and the second exodus

51:12-16 YHWH comforts the converted in a time of oppression

51:17-23 The fate of the physical city of Jerusalem

52:3-6 The transition of 'Jerusalem' from a physical city to a spiritual entity, the Church

52:1-2, 7-10 The Church with the gospel – the good news of the Kingdom of God

52:11-12 Taking the gospel into all the world in the World Tomorrow

52:13-53:12 The Fourth Servant Song: The Suffering Servant, the Messiah

52:13-15 Christ's death and the ultimate effect his resurrection will have on the nations

53:1-3 The first coming of Christ: not recognized by his contemporaries, but proclaimed by the Church

53:4-6 The substitutionary nature of Christ's sacrifice – he paid for our sins
 53:7-9 The suffering of Christ and the injustice of his death
 53:10-12 The benefit of Christ's death and resurrection – salvation is available to all people
 54: The body of the servant: the faithful remnant of physical Israel morphing into the New Testament Church, the resurrection of the saints, the Church in the World Tomorrow
 54:1 The barren one is New Testament Church; physical Israel was married to YHWH – the Church becomes the bride at the resurrection; but, the Church is preparing more converted people for the resurrection than physical Israel did (Gl4:27, Rv12:12, 5-6)
 54:2-4 New Israel, coterminous with the Church, in the World Tomorrow
 54:5-8 Physical Israel as the wife of YHWH: rejected with destruction of the nation; but, the faithful remnant preserved and called to form the beginning of the New Testament Church
 54:9-10 The relationship of YHWH (Christ) to the New Testament Church
 54:11-14 The resurrected saints: our 'children' will include all people in the World Tomorrow, but this may also allude to our actual children and grand children
 54:15-17 A warning against causing strife; God will provide the means to deal with external strife
 55:1-5 A general call to conversion: resulting in the resurrection – 'he has glorified you'
 55:6-9 A general call to repentance: the precursor, and ongoing requirement, to conversion
 55:10-13 God's word will accomplish his purpose – the joy and peace of the World Tomorrow
 56:1-8 Salvation is by grace not race: the Sabbath is the key to understanding God's way

Conditions During the Time of Manasseh

56:9-12 General condemnation of the leaders: watchmen, shepherds, 'dogs' (like today's leaders)
 57:1-13 Manasseh's corrupt and evil reign; v1 allusion to death of Hezekiah; v3 allusion to the mother of Manasseh
 57:14-19 In spite of Israel's vile condition, God will accomplish his purpose through the second exodus and the New Israel

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57:20-21 The incorrigible will not participate in God's peace
 58:1-5 Residual effects of Hezekiah's reform: people expected their fasting to garner favour from God, but their attitude was wrong
 58:6-14 Fasting with the right attitude and Sabbath observance will lead to understanding God's way, and true conversion
 59:1-8 Condition of society under Manasseh: very much like today!
 59:9-15a Isaiah prays on behalf of Israel in light of the vile condition of the nation
 59:15b-21 God's reaction: the punishment of the evil is certain, as is the reward of those who repent

Jerusalem!

Jerusalem is personified, mostly representing the Church (Gl4:26, Hb12:22-23), but also the historic city, Jerusalem in the World Tomorrow, and the New Jerusalem beyond.
 60:1-3 The return of Christ to a dark world and the resurrection of the saints (1Jh3:2, 1Cr15:42-44)
 60:4-14 The second exodus and Jerusalem in the World Tomorrow; v12 has previously occurred in the Day of YHWH
 60:15-18 the historic city contrasted with the city in the World Tomorrow
 60:19-20 New Jerusalem (65:17, 66:22, Rv21:1-2)
 60:21-22 New Israel in the World Tomorrow
 61:1-4 The Fifth Servant Song: The First and Second Comings of the Messiah
 61:5-9 New Israel, coterminous with the Church in the World Tomorrow – taking the Gospel to the whole world
 61:10-11 A doxology: Isaiah prays on behalf of the Servant (Saints, the Church)
 62:1-5 The complete symbolism: Jerusalem explicitly mentioned, salvation, the contrast with the old physical city, the Church as the Bride of Christ
 62:6-7 Ancient Jerusalem had the prophets as watchmen – we have their written works; the Church has inherited the role of watchman: God implores us to pray daily that he will act (see 63: - 65: below)
 62:8-12 God will usher in the World Tomorrow; the second exodus will occur; the New Israel will accomplish God's purpose

A Plea for God to Act

63:1-6 The Day of YHWH: Edom (Dt3:2, Jdg5:4-5, Hab3:3); winepress (Rv14:14-20, 19:15)
 63:7-14 Isaiah recounts the unrequited love (*hesed*) of YHWH for ancient Israel
 63:15-64:12 A prayer of Isaiah (chapter break should NOT be there)
 63:15-19 Isaiah prays on behalf of Israel/the servant/the remnant for YHWH to act
 64:1-3 The impeding Day of YHWH compared to the theophany at Sinai
 64:4-7 Isaiah recounts Israel's state of sin, in spite of God's many acts of salvation, culminating in the crises under Manasseh
 64:8-12 Isaiah looks to the impeding destruction of Israel and prays for YHWH to rework Israel (potter and clay – see Jr18:1-11) and proceed with the next phase of his plan
 65:1-7 YHWH responds directly to Isaiah's prayer: though he had always been ready to accept repentance from Israel, their attitude was now incorrigible (v5 very prevalent in the world today) and destruction is immanent
 65:8-10, 16 YHWH will accomplish his plan through a remnant called to form the New Israel
 65:11-15 the destruction of old Israel is inevitable, in contrast to the servants of YHWH (the remnant)
 65:17-25 The World Tomorrow and beyond – the accomplishment of the plan of God!

Final Summary

66:1-2 The greatness of God reiterated (see 40:12-31)
 66:3-5 The fate of the incorrigible and the converted contrasted
 66:6-9 the coming of the Messiah and the resurrection of the saints (the converted, the servant)
 66:10-14 Jerusalem: the Church, the mother of God's family (recalls 60: - 62:)
 66:15-17, 24 The Day of YHWH and the fate of the incorrigible
 66:18-23 The World Tomorrow and beyond; taking the gospel to all nations; the continued growth of New Israel