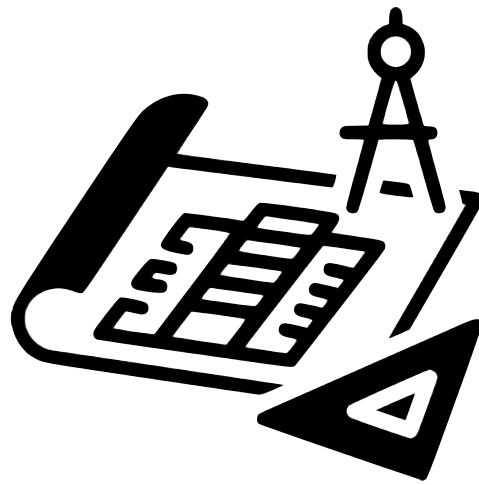


# GRAND DESIGNS

GOD'S GLORIOUS PLAN TO TRANSFORM THE WORLD



STUDIES IN ISAIAH 13-66

In this set of studies we return to the earth-shattering words of the prophet Isaiah. Again we will be drawn into the drama of God's glorious plans to transform the entire world. Again we will discover profound and surprising ways in which the Lord cares for His people. Again we will be spurred on to marvel at what God is doing in our lives, to trust Him more and more, and to live all for King Jesus.

Many of the studies cover large sections of Isaiah. Out of necessity some studies will therefore only focus on key representative passages within each section. If at all possible, it would still be helpful to read the entire section. Even though this isn't necessary to do the studies, reading each section in its entirety will help you appreciate the fuller context of the study.

As with any Bible study, these are best done in advance when doing them in a group context.

.

## Isaiah 13-27

### The story so far

*In chapters 1-12, Isaiah has introduced us to God's epic plan to transform the world. A plan which involves punishing those who rebel against God but also forgiving and purifying those who are humble and repentant before God. Up until now this plan has mainly centred on Judah and Jerusalem. However in this section, it becomes obvious that God's plan will involve all nations.*

### Read Isaiah 13

1) What is this chapter about?

2) Who are being punished by God in this chapter? (13:9,11)

3) There are some especially awful images within this chapter. Why do you think some verses are so horrific? What reaction do they produce in you?

4) Very quickly skim over Isaiah 14-23. Which other countries also have oracles concerning them? In what ways are their oracles similar to the oracle concerning Babylon in chapter 13?

### Read Isaiah 24:1-13

5) God's judgement of specific nations is now replaced with a general description of His judgement of all the earth. Who will be caught up in this judgement? (24:1-3).

6) What reasons are given for God's judgement on the earth? (24:5-6)

7) What do you think "the everlasting covenant" might be in verse 6?

**Read Isaiah 24:14-16**

8) What sudden and unexpected thing happens in these verses?

9) What reason is given for it?

**Read Isaiah 25**

10) What is celebrated in this chapter?

**Optional:**

11) If you have time, also read Isaiah 26-27. What do these chapters celebrate?

**Think it over**

- How do these chapters enrich our understanding of the work of Christ?
  
- In this section, God's judgement is described as severe and sobering but also something to be celebrated. In what ways are God's judgement good news?
  
- "I don't think God will punish anyone. He's a God of love." How might you answer a comment like that?

## Isaiah 28-35

*This is another long section. Despite its length, the structure is quite straightforward. It is a collection of "woes" followed by a picture of a new world.*

### **A collection of woes.**

- 1) Who are the different "woes" directed at? 28:1, 29:1, 29:15, 30:1, 31:1, 33:1.
  
- 2) Read in full the woe to Ariel ie Jerusalem (29:15-24). What is God's complaint against the leaders of Jerusalem? What is God going to do in response?
  
- 3) Despite this declaration of God's judgment what is God's ultimate desire for Jerusalem? (see 29:22-24)
  
- 4) Many of the woes focus on Judah's foolish decision to seek a treaty with Egypt for protection from the Assyrians. Why is this treaty so offensive to God? (read 30:1-5, 31:1-3).
  
- 5) Why is God declaring these woes? What sort of response is he seeking? (28:22-23, 29:18-22, 30:15, 31:6)
  
- 6) In Isaiah 28:21, God's judgement is described as an "alien task" and "his strange work." What do you think these phrases mean? What do they tell us about God?

### **A picture of a new world**

7) After all the woes, as further motivation for Judah to make right choices, Isaiah now describes the new world that God is planning to bring in. According to Isaiah, what is the key to being in this new world? (33:2-6)

8) Read Isaiah 35. Make a list of all the good things which will be in the new world that God is planning?

9) What things won't be in the new world God is planning?

### **Optional:**

10) Read Revelation's description of God's new world (Revelation 21:1-22:5). What things are different and what things are similar to the description in Isaiah 35?

### **Think it over**

- Think about Isaiah's description of God's new world. How might this description spur us on in our trust and obedience of God? Try and be specific in your suggestions.
  
- Overall, do you find this a comforting or a challenging section of Isaiah? Why?
  
- How do these chapters enrich our understanding of the work of Christ?

## **Isaiah 36-39**

*These chapters are an important central hinge in Isaiah. The events of these narrative chapters are the basis for many of the visions throughout the book, These chapters are therefore worth reading in full.*

### **Read Isaiah 36**

- 1) What threat is described in this chapter?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 2) What choices exist for Judah? How does the Assyrian field commander weave truth and lies to try and persuade King Hezekiah?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 3) Think about your week. How would you answer the Assyrian's question, "On whom are you depending?"

### **Read Isaiah 37**

- 4) How is God portrayed in this chapter?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 5) How is Hezekiah's response a good model for how we should respond to God?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 6) In what way does God's word to King Hezekiah foreshadow the coming of King Jesus? (37:31-32)

**Read Isaiah 38**

7) What new threat does Hezekiah face in this chapter? How does it compare to the threat of chapter 36?

8) What does Hezekiah learn through suffering?

9) What lesson do you think this chapter holds for us?

**Read Isaiah 39**

10) In what way is Hezekiah a disappointment in this chapter?

11) The actions of God's king always have repercussions for God's people. What repercussions will now follow as a result of Hezekiah's foolishness.

**Think it over**

- What is the most comforting thing you've discovered about God in this section?
  
- In what ways does this section increase our anticipation for the coming of King Jesus?
  
- Hezekiah trusted in God in times of trouble yet failed at a time of "letters and a gift." What do we learn here about the insidiousness of sin? How might we prevent the same thing happening to us?



# Isaiah 40

*Today's section makes a radical change in tone within the book. The dominant theme from now on will be one of comfort and hope.*

## Read Isaiah 40:1-11

1) How many voices seem to be speaking in these verses? To whom are they speaking? What effect does this have on you as you read it?

2) Why do you think Jerusalem and Judah are in need of comforting? (cf Isaiah 39:5-7)

3) What reasons are given for the comfort? List as many as you can.

4) What do these verses reveal about the character of God?

5) In what ways do these verses foreshadow the coming of Jesus?

## Read Isaiah 40:12-31

6) This section is characterised by brackets of rhetoric questions followed by a conclusion. Try and write a summary sentence for each conclusion.

questions (v11-14)  
conclusion (v15-17)

summary sentence:

questions (v18)  
conclusion (v19-20)

summary sentence:

questions (v21)  
conclusion (v22-24)

summary sentence:

questions (v25-26a)  
conclusion (v26b)

summary sentence:

questions (v27-29a)  
conclusion (v29b-31)

summary sentence:

7) Which of the above conclusions do you find most comforting?

**Think it over**

- In times of distress or uncertainty, what brings you comfort? Do you find comfort in hearing truth about God? Why or why not?
  
- “The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever.” (40:8). In what ways should this truth shape our lives?
  
- When are we likely to forget that God is powerful, wise and caring? How can we help each other to not forget?

## Isaiah 41-48

*In this study we'll be focusing on what is commonly referred to as Isaiah's first servant song.*

### **Read Isaiah 42:1-7**

- 1) Who is speaking in these verses? Who is the focus of their attention?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 2) What do we learn about the servant's relationship with God?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 3) What do the two images in verse 3 tell us about this mysterious servant?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 4) List as many things as you can about what this servant will do.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 5) Why do you think Isaiah reminds us that God "created the heavens and stretched them out"? (42:5)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 6) In the surrounding verses (ie chapter 41-48), Israel is also described as God's servant (eg 41:8-9). In what ways does the servant sound similar to Israel? In what ways does he sound different?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 7) Read Matthew 12:1-21. Who is identified as the servant? Can you think of episodes in Jesus' ministry which fulfil the things described in this servant song?

**Read Isaiah 42:8-12**

8) What is the “new thing” that God is declaring?

9) What response is called on from God’s people?

**Think it over**

- Look back over the characteristics you’ve discovered about God and his servant Jesus. Which ones do you find especially encouraging? Why?
  
- At the end of this servant song, Isaiah urges us to praise the Lord (v10). What does it mean to praise God? When is it hard to do? How does this passage help us to do it? What might this look like in your life?
  
- Our focus at BPC this year is Jesus For All. Our desire is for everyone to hear the good news of Jesus. In what ways does this servant song encourage us to do this?
  
- Think of someone you know who is not a Christian but interested in the person of Jesus . What aspect of Jesus would be most appealing to them from this servant song? Why?

## Isaiah 49-51

*After the introduction of God's servant in the previous study, Isaiah now describes a three-way conversation between the servant, God and Jerusalem (Israel).*

### **Read Isaiah 49:1-13**

1) These verses are often known as the "Second Servant Song." What truths are repeated from the previous study about the servant?

2) What **new** things do we learn about God's servant in these verses?

3) Are there any things which surprise you about the servant in these verses?

### **Read Isaiah 49:14-26**

4) What does Zion (ie Jerusalem) complain about in v14?

5) How does God respond to Zion's complaint?

6) What do these verses add to our understanding of God?

### **Read Isaiah 50:4-11**

7) In these verses the servant resumes his speech. How would you summarise the ministry of the servant from this section?

8) What does the servant call on Israel to do in v10?

9) In what ways did Jesus perfectly fulfil the ministry of the servant as described in today's study? Can you give specific examples from the gospels.

**Read Isaiah 51:1-11**

10) After calling on Israel to obey God's servant and to rely on God (see question 8), God now calls on Israel to "listen" to him (51:1, 4). What does God want Israel to know?

11) How does God want Israel to react to what they hear (see 51:9,17)?

**Think it over**

- Are there times when you have felt the same as Zion in 49:14? How might this section of Isaiah help at those times?
  
- How is obedience demonstrated by the servant in this section? How is this an encouragement to us when we feel tired of doing the good?
  
- Once again God's servant is described as "a light to the Gentiles" (49:6) In Matthew 5:14 - 16, Jesus tells his followers that they are "the light of the world." How might we continue the servant work of Jesus?

**Isaiah 52-56**

*In this study we'll be focusing on what is commonly referred to as Isaiah's "suffering servant" song. It's one of the great passages of the Old Testament.*

**Read Isaiah 52:13-53:12**

1) This servant song has five main stanzas. Try and write a single sentence summary for each stanza

Stanza	Sentence Summary
Isaiah 52:13-15	
Isaiah 53:1-3	
Isaiah 53:4-6	
Isaiah 53:7-9	
Isaiah 53:10-12	

2) Now try and write a sentence summary for the main point of this passage.

3) What feelings does this poem create in you? How? Why?

4) Make a list of all the things this passage says about how people get into a right relationship with God.

5) How does Jesus achieve the things you listed in the previous question?

**Read Philippians 2:1-11**

6) How do Paul's words here help our understanding of the servant's exaltation after his death?

7) How does Philippians 2 help us understand how to live as those who benefit from the servant's ministry?

**Optional:**

8) Skim over the contents of Isaiah 54-56. In what ways are contents of these chapters the consequences of the suffering servant's ministry.

**Think it over**

- A Christian friend tells you they can continue to embrace a sinful lifestyle because "sin doesn't really matter." How would you use this servant song to respond to your friend's statement?
  
- Our vision statement at BPC is *All for Jesus*. How does this servant song encourage you to do this?
  
- Our focus at BPC this year is *Jesus For All*. How does this servant song encourage you to do this?



## Isaiah 61

*In this study we'll be focusing on the fourth and final servant song in Isaiah. It's one of the great passages of the Old Testament. This song is placed within the broader context of Isaiah 57-64, a section which transitions from describing Israel's wickedness to describing Israel as a holy and redeemed people. The fourth servant song is the centre hinge which describes how such a radical change is possible.*

### **Read Isaiah 61:1-6**

1) How does the servant describe himself?

2) What does the servant say he has come to do?

3) A lot of the previous chapters in Isaiah have been about punishment. What effect would these words have had on Israel?

### **Read Isaiah 61:7-9**

4) The voice now changes to God himself speaking (cf "my people" v7, "I, the LORD" v8). How does God describe himself?

5) What are God's intentions for his people?

### **Read Isaiah 61:10-11**

6) The servant now continues to speak. What are God's plans for his servant?

7) How are God's plans for his servant linked to God's plans for all nations?

**Read Luke 4:14-30**

8) What does this reveal about the servant? What does this reveal about Jesus?

**Think it over**

- Quickly look back over the previous three studies. List out as many things as you can about the servant described in these studies.

- What does your list tell you about the importance of Jesus?

- What things in life are currently distracting you from the importance of Jesus? What can you do to minimise these distractions?

- Can you think of ways that your group could help others realise the importance of Jesus?

## Isaiah 65-66

*In this final section of Isaiah we are given a breathtaking description of the new world which God is planning to create.*

### **Read Isaiah 65:17-25**

1) Make a list of the things that won't exist in the new earth?

2) What will these things be replaced with?

3) What do you think the images of verse 25 are meant to represent?

4) Are there any aspects of the new heavens and earth which especially comfort you? Why?

5) How does God want Israel to feel about his plan for a new heavens and a new earth (65:18,)? What do you think this would look like in everyday life?

### **Read Isaiah 66**

6) What sort of people does God not tolerate?

7) Who does God call on to rejoice? Why?

8) Some people suggest that Isaiah would have been better if it had ended at chapter 65. What do you think? Why do you think chapter 66 is so confronting?

**Think it over**

- We've finally reached the end of Isaiah. Take a quick look back over these studies. Have there been any specific sections/studies which have particularly impacted you? Why?
  
- Has Isaiah helped you better understand any aspects of Jesus ministry? In what ways?
  
- In some of the previous studies we've recalled that our vision statement at BPC is *All for Jesus*. How has the book of Isaiah encouraged you to live this way?
  
- In some of the previous studies we've recalled that our focus at BPC this year is *Jesus For All*. How has the book of Isaiah encouraged you to pursue this?