

ISAIAH

Comfort Ye My People

*Come now, and let us reason together,
saith the LORD:
though your sins be as scarlet,
they shall be as white as snow;
though they be red like crimson,
they shall be as wool.
Isaiah 1:18*

Trinity Bible Church
Sunday School
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Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Schedule	5
Scripture Memorization: Isaiah 53:1-12	6
Hymn Memorization: “Stricken, Smitten, and Afflicted”	8
Lesson 1: Judah’s Unfaithfulness and God’s Purifying Wrath	9
2: The Coming Child-King	10
3: The Assyrian Invasion and the LORD’S Deliverance	11
4: Oracles against the Nations (Part 1)	12
5: Oracles against the Nations (Part 2)	13
6: The Coming World-wide Apocalypse	14
7: A False Hope and the Sure Hope	15
8: Jerusalem’s Future Glory	16
9: The LORD Protects Jerusalem	17
10: The Servant is a Light to the Gentiles	18
11: The LORD Names Cyrus	19
12: The Servant is Divinely Empowered for Success	20
13: The Servant is Obedient Amidst Suffering	21
14: The Servant is a Sacrifice for Sin	22
15: Israel’s Rebels and the LORD’S Salvation	23
16: Zion Exalted above the Nations	24
17: The Repentant are Blessed in Jerusalem	25
Chart	26

Introduction

Isaiah has been called “the prince of the prophets.” Some have suggested that Isaiah was closely related to the royal family, but the title could just as easily be applied to his writing style. His variety of words, free use of imagery, and mastery of style make Isaiah’s book a literary masterpiece. Isaiah reveals important details about the work of the Messiah, and the New Testament quotes Isaiah more than any other prophetic book.

Isaiah’s lifetime coincides with the beginning of the captivity of the Northern Kingdom of Israel in 722 B.C. The prophet ministered to Judah during the reigns of King Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah, and perhaps Manasseh, a span of nearly sixty years. According to tradition, Isaiah was killed during the reign of King Manasseh by being sawed in half inside a hollow log. Perhaps the writer of Hebrews refers to Isaiah’s death when he mentions that some “were sawn asunder” (Hebrews 11:37).

Isaiah’s book can be divided into two main sections. In Chapters 1-39 the wrath of God is prominent. Isaiah 40:1 sets the tone for the second section: “Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.” Chapters 40-66 emphasize hope for the remnant of Israel. This distinction is helpful although both sections mingle warnings of wrath with promises of blessing.

In the book of Isaiah the LORD brings charges against His people. They have broken the Mosaic covenant, but He has been faithful to it. The prophet exposes the sins of his people, announces God’s judgment, and urges repentance.

The prophecies of Isaiah are interrupted by two historical interludes. In the first (Chapters 7-8), Syria and the Northern Kingdom of Israel have made an alliance, and they threaten Judah which is ruled by King Ahaz. Judah has nothing to fear from them, however, for the LORD has determined that Assyria will conquer Syria and Israel before they are able to damage Judah.

In fact, it is Assyria, not Syria or Israel, which

serves as the LORD’S tool of judgment for His rebellious nation Judah. However, there is a limit to this judgment. The LORD makes it clear that Assyria will not overrun the city of Jerusalem. Although Assyria will be allowed to invade the Judean countryside and bring the nation to its knees, Jerusalem will be left undisturbed like “a lodge in a garden of cucumbers” (1:8). In fact, God promises to save Jerusalem from the Assyrians by direct divine intervention. Isaiah encourages the people to wait patiently on the LORD instead of seeking aid against Assyria through other means, such as a military alliance with Egypt.

The second historical interlude (Chapters 36-39) finds Assyria threatening to besiege Jerusalem. Faithful King Hezekiah turns to the LORD in prayer, and the LORD Himself delivers Jerusalem by slaughtering 185,000 Assyrian soldiers. After Isaiah’s rather understated reference to this miraculous event, the focus of the book shifts from Assyria to Babylon. The rest of the book anticipates the time when the Babylonians will oppress Judah and the temple will be destroyed. The prophet assures the people that their captivity will not be permanent and that the Babylonians will be judged.

Descriptions of the LORD’S future restoration of Jerusalem appear throughout the book of Isaiah. Jerusalem’s exaltation is accompanied by the ingathering of the scattered remnant, cessation of all warfare, the LORD’S presence in Jerusalem, and Israelite domination of the nations under the rule of a coming Davidic King. Isaiah’s prophecies anticipate the virgin-birth (7:14) and childhood (9:6) of this “Rod out of the stem of Jesse” (11:1).

Isaiah often seems to mingle impending judgment with blessing for Jerusalem in the same breath. The reader must understand that the prophet refers to two groups: Israel’s rebels and Israel’s remnant. When the LORD comes to bless Jerusalem, He will finally purge out Israel’s rebels. The blessing is for the remnant who will repent of their sins and receive their righteousness from the LORD. Thus the prophet looks forward to a day of wrath followed by a

Introduction (continued)

time of unprecedented blessing for Jerusalem.

On the day of the LORD'S wrath when He purges away the rebels of Israel, He will also destroy Israel's foreign enemies. Much (if not most) of the wrath that Isaiah announces to the nations seems to point to this same future day and should be considered unfulfilled.

Chapters 40-55 feature a contest reminiscent of the confrontation on Mt. Carmel between Elijah and the prophets of Baal. Instead of challenging the false gods to answer by fire, the LORD challenges them to foretell the future. In this way God demonstrates His unequalled supremacy as He asserts, "I am the LORD, and there is none else" (45:5), and, "My glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images" (42:8).

Just as Elijah mocks the prophets of Baal, the LORD also reinforces his point by ridiculing idolaters. Several caricatures of idolatry point out the futility and folly of trusting idols. The LORD, on the other hand, is infinitely worthy of trust. He commits Himself to the ultimate

salvation of His people. As Israel's only Savior, He insists that He has not forgotten them.

The LORD demonstrates His unrivaled sovereignty by telling the future. His revelation of the future features two key figures. The first is Cyrus, the king whom the LORD promises to raise up and empower for conquest. The LORD makes a special point of calling Cyrus by name 150 years before he appears on the stage of world events. The second figure is the Messiah, who is called the LORD'S Servant. The Servant is described in four songs, and He appears as the speaker in several other passages. In marked contrast to the LORD'S rebellious servant Israel, this Servant is completely obedient and successful in His mission to restore Israel and to be a light to the Gentiles. The Servant songs climax with the fourth song in which the Servant Himself is offered as a sacrifice for sin, satisfying the wrath of God. The Servant's suffering on behalf of His people is the basis for the forgiveness so freely offered elsewhere in the book.

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Schedule

September

- 7 Lesson 1: Judah's Unfaithfulness and God's Purifying Wrath
Isaiah 1-4
- 14 Lesson 2: The Coming Child-King
Isaiah 5:1-9:7
- 21 Lesson 3: The Assyrian Invasion and the LORD'S Deliverance
Isaiah 9:8-12:6
- 28 Lesson 4: Oracles against the Nations (Part 1)
Isaiah 13-17

October

- 5 Lesson 5: Oracles against the Nations (Part 2)
Isaiah 18-22
- 12 Lesson 6: The Coming World-wide Apocalypse
Isaiah 23-27
- 19 Lesson 7: A False Hope and the Sure Hope
Isaiah 28-31
- 26 Lesson 8: Jerusalem's Future Glory
Isaiah 32-35

November

- 2 Lesson 9: The LORD Protects Jerusalem
Isaiah 36-39
- 9 Lesson 10: The Servant is a Light to the Gentiles
Isaiah 40-42
- 16 Lesson 11: The LORD Names Cyrus
Isaiah 43-45
- 23 Lesson 12: The Servant is Divinely Empowered for Success
Isaiah 46:1-49:13
- 30 Lesson 13: The Servant is Obedient Amidst Suffering
Isaiah 49:14-52:12

December

- 7 Lesson 14: The Servant is a Sacrifice for Sin
Isaiah 52:13-55:13
- 14 Lesson 15: Israel's Rebels and the LORD'S Salvation
Isaiah 56-59
- 21 Lesson 16: Zion Exalted above the Nations
Isaiah 60:1-63:6
- 28 Lesson 17: The Repentant are Blessed in Jerusalem
Isaiah 63:7-66:24

Scripture Memorization

Isaiah 53:1-12

1. Who hath believed our report?
and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?
2. For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant,
and as a root out of a dry ground:
he hath no form nor comeliness;
and when we shall see him,
there is no beauty that we should desire him.
3. He is despised and rejected of men;
a man of sorrows,
and acquainted with grief:
and we hid as it were our faces from him;
he was despised,
and we esteemed him not.
4. Surely he hath borne our griefs,
and carried our sorrows:
yet we did esteem him stricken,
smitten of God, and afflicted.
5. But he was wounded for our transgressions,
he was bruised for our iniquities:
the chastisement of our peace was upon him;
and with his stripes we are healed.
6. All we like sheep have gone astray;
we have turned every one to his own way;
and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.
7. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted,
yet he opened not his mouth:
he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter,
and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb,
so he openeth not his mouth.
8. He was taken from prison and from judgment:
and who shall declare his generation?
For he was cut off out of the land of the living:
for the transgression of my people was he stricken.

Scripture Memorization (continued)

9. And he made his grave with the wicked,
and with the rich in his death;
because he had done no violence,
neither was any deceit in his mouth.

10. Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him;
he hath put him to grief:
when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin,
he shall see his seed,
he shall prolong his days,
and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.

11. He shall see of the travail of his soul,
and shall be satisfied:
by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many;
for he shall bear their iniquities.

12. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great,
and he shall divide the spoil with the strong;
because he hath poured out his soul unto death:
and he was numbered with the transgressors;
and he bare the sin of many,
and made intercession for the transgressors.

Stricken, Smitten, and Afflicted

Thomas Kelly, 1804

Gistleche Volkslieder, Paderborn, 1850

1. Strick - en, smit - ten, and af - flict - ed, See him dy - ing on the tree!
 2. Tell me, ye who hear him groan - ing, Was there ev - er grief like his?
 3. Ye who think of sin but light - ly Nor sup - pose the e - vil great
 4. Here we have a firm foun - da - tion, Here the re - fuge of the lost;

'Tis the Christ by man re - ject - ed; Yes, my soul, 'tis he, 'tis he!
 Friends thro' fear his cause dis - own - ing, Foes in - sult - ing his dis - tress;
 Here may view its na - ture right - ly, Here its guilt may es - ti - mate.
 Christ's the Rock of our sal - va - tion, His the name of which we boast.

'Tis the long - ex - pect - ed Proph - et, Da - vid's Son, yet Da - vid's Lord;
 Man - y hands were raised to wound him, None would in - ter - pose to save;
 Mark the Sac - ri - fice ap - point - ed, See who bears the aw - ful load;
 Lamb of God, for sin - ners wound - ed, Sac - ri - fice to can - cel guilt!

By his Son God now has spok - en: 'Tis the true and faith - ful Word.
 But the deep - est stroke that pierced him Was the stroke that Jus - tice gave.
 'Tis the Word, the Lord's A - noint - ed, Son of Man and Son of God.
 None shall ev - er be con - found - ed Who on him their hope have built. A - men.

Lesson 1: Judah's Unfaithfulness and God's Purifying Wrath Isaiah 1-4

Memory: Isaiah 53:1

Hymn: "Stricken, Smitten, and Afflicted"

The LORD indicts Judah and Jerusalem for disobedience to the covenant. He calls the people to repentance, warning them of the coming day of wrath. However, the LORD promises that a purified and exalted Jerusalem will emerge after the day of wrath.

1. What imagery does Isaiah use to describe the disobedience of Judah and Jerusalem?
2. What religious exercises does the LORD detest?
3. What solution does the LORD prescribe?
4. What is the result for the city when the LORD purges away the dross?
5. What conditions characterize the LORD'S reign in the latter days?
6. Upon whom does the day of the LORD of hosts bring disaster, and what is the end result of that day?
7. How does the LORD'S judgment affect the leadership of Jerusalem and Judah?
8. What is the crime of the daughters of Zion?
9. What does the LORD accomplish in Jerusalem by the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning?

Lesson 2: The Coming Child-King Isaiah 5:1-9:7

Memory: Isaiah 53:1-2

Hymn: “Stricken, Smitten, and Afflicted”

After pronouncing woe upon Judah’s rebels, Isaiah writes about the vision in which the LORD calls him to prophetic ministry. The LORD sends Isaiah with a message of deliverance for King Ahaz. As a sign, the LORD promises that a virgin will bear a Son named Immanuel. This coming Child-King will set up a government of peace, ruling from the throne of David.

1. What are the answers anticipated by the two questions in the song of the Beloved regarding His vineyard?
2. Upon whom does Isaiah pronounce woe?
3. How does the LORD manifest His glory to each of Isaiah’s senses of sight, touch, and hearing?
4. What is to be the end result of Isaiah’s ministry?
5. Why are King Ahaz and his people afraid?
6. What sign does the Lord promise to give?
7. What is the meaning of Isaiah’s son’s name (Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz), and why is he given that name?
8. To what does Isaiah compare the king of Assyria?
9. What names are given to the Child, and what will the Child do?

Lesson 3: The Assyrian Invasion and the LORD'S Deliverance Isaiah 9:8-12:6

Memory: Isaiah 53:1-3

Hymn: "Stricken, Smitten, and Afflicted"

The LORD warns the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the towns of Judah of the coming Assyrian assault. However, the LORD determines to deliver Jerusalem from the Assyrians. Although the Assyrians are the LORD'S tool of judgment, He promises to judge them as well. Isaiah also prophesies about a coming day of deliverance for the remnant of Israel under the rule of a Davidic King.

1. What do Ephraim and the inhabitants of Samaria say in pride and arrogance of heart, and why is it wrong for them to say this?
2. What refrain is repeated against them?
3. Why does God pronounce woe upon Assyria, His tool of judgment?
4. What is Assyria's punishment?
5. What will the remnant of Israel do in the day Isaiah describes?
6. Is Jerusalem to be conquered by the Assyrians like the other towns of Judah? Why or why not?
7. What does Isaiah foretell that the Rod from the stem of Jesse will do?
8. What will happen to the remnant of God's people and the outcasts of Israel when the Rod from the stem of Jesse comes forth?
9. What names or attributes are ascribed to the LORD in the two songs of praise?

Lesson 5: Oracles against the Nations (Part 2)
Isaiah 18-22

Memory: Isaiah 53:1-5

Hymn: “Stricken, Smitten, and Afflicted”

Isaiah records the LORD'S message of judgment to the nations of Ethiopia, Egypt, Babylon, Edom, Arabia, and Judah.

1. At the time when the Ethiopians are punished, where will they bring a present?
2. How will the LORD'S judgment affect Egypt's gods, rivers, and leaders?
3. Is there a word of mercy for Egypt? If so, what is it? Who else is included?
4. What is the significance of the prophet's symbolic act?
5. The oracle against the Wilderness of the Sea contains a message of disaster for what nation?
6. How does the watchman answer the question about the night in Isaiah's oracle against Dumah?
7. In the oracle against Arabia, what does the LORD say will happen within a year?
8. What sins are mentioned in the oracle against the Valley of Vision?
9. What is the LORD'S message concerning Shebna? What is the LORD'S message concerning Eliakim?

Lesson 6: The Coming World-wide Apocalypse Isaiah 23-27

Memory: Isaiah 53:1-6

Hymn: “Stricken, Smitten, and Afflicted”

The prophet concludes his messages to the nations with an oracle against Tyre. Isaiah then warns all the inhabitants of the earth about a day when the LORD Himself will punish all earth-dwellers for their iniquity. This time of divine judgment will also include purging and salvation for the nation of Israel.

1. Who will mourn for Tyre when she is destroyed?

2. What kinds of people will experience the LORD'S judgment of the earth?

3. At the time of the LORD'S judgment of the earth, what will happen to the sun and the moon, and from where will the LORD reign?

4. Why is the name of the LORD worthy of praise?

5. What will the Lord GOD swallow up, and what will He wipe away?

6. What is said about resurrection in the song that will be sung in the land of Judah?

7. What advice does the prophet give to his people in light of the coming judgment?

8. What does the LORD say about the iniquity of Jacob?

9. What will happen to the children of Israel on the day in which the LORD threshes from the Euphrates River to the Brook of Egypt?

Lesson 7: A False Hope and the Sure Hope Isaiah 28-31

Memory: Isaiah 53:1-7

Hymn: “Stricken, Smitten, and Afflicted”

The LORD indicts Jerusalem and its leaders for putting their hope in Egypt against the Assyrian threat. In their blind rush to put their trust in futile Egypt, they abandon their true strength: simple dependence upon the LORD. Despite their rebellion, the LORD promises to fight against Assyria in order to protect Jerusalem.

1. The prophet indicts the Ephraimites, the priests, and the prophets for what particular sin?
2. What is the attitude of Jerusalem’s leaders toward the Word of God?
3. What does the LORD say about their covenant with death?
4. How will the LORD deal with Ariel, and how will the LORD deal with the multitude that fights against Ariel?
5. Why do the prophets and seers stagger like drunkards?
6. Whom do the rebellious children trust?
7. How effective will Egypt be to protect Jerusalem from Assyria?
8. Instead of depending on swift horses, how does the LORD intend for His people to be saved?
9. What does the Lord promise to do when Assyria attacks Jerusalem?

Lesson 8: Jerusalem's Future Glory
Isaiah 32-35

Memory: Isaiah 53:1-8

Hymn: "Stricken, Smitten, and Afflicted"

The prophet describes Israel's glorious future Kingdom which the LORD will establish. The prophet also includes a prayer for the LORD'S deliverance. He foretells the time when the LORD will pour out His wrath upon Israel's enemies, especially Edom.

1. What will characterize the reign of the King and His princes?

2. The land of Isaiah's people will be desolate until what event?

3. What requests are recorded in the prayer? What truths are affirmed?

4. Who in Zion is afraid? Why are they afraid?

5. What will happen to the diseases of the inhabitants of Jerusalem? What will happen to their iniquities?

6. Upon whom will the LORD pour out His indignation and wrath?

7. What will happen to the blind, deaf, lame, and dumb after God comes with vengeance?

8. What will happen in the wilderness and in the desert?

9. What is the purpose of the road called the Highway of Holiness?

Lesson 9: The LORD Protects Jerusalem Isaiah 36-39

Memory: Isaiah 53:1-9

Hymn: "Stricken, Smitten, and Afflicted"

After the Assyrians threaten to besiege Jerusalem, King Hezekiah turns to the LORD in prayer. The LORD fulfills His promise to protect Jerusalem by slaughtering 185,000 Assyrian soldiers. When Hezekiah becomes sick and near death, he cries out to the LORD to spare his life. The LORD gives Hezekiah recovery from his illness. After Hezekiah shows the Babylonian officials all his riches, Isaiah tells him that all his wealth will eventually be carried to Babylon as plunder.

1. What reasons does the Rabshakeh mention for his assurance of Assyrian victory over Jerusalem?

2. What advice does the Rabshakeh give to the men on the walls of Jerusalem?

3. What does King Hezekiah do after he hears the words of the Rabshakeh?

4. What does King Hezekiah do after he receives the letter from Sennacherib, the king of Assyria?

5. What word does the LORD speak concerning Sennacherib?

6. What does the Angel of the LORD do in order to protect Jerusalem?

7. What does the LORD do for King Hezekiah when he prays about his sickness?

8. What is the purpose of the song written by King Hezekiah?

9. What does the LORD tell King Hezekiah about the Babylonians?

Lesson 10: The Servant is a Light to the Gentiles Isaiah 40-42

Memory: Isaiah 53:1-10

Hymn: "Stricken, Smitten, and Afflicted"

The LORD brings His people a message of comfort. The God of Israel is incomparably greater than idols, because He can foretell future events before they happen. Isaiah prophesies that the LORD will send His Servant who will be a covenant to God's people Israel and a light to the Gentiles.

1. What will the Lord GOD do for His flock when He comes to rule?
2. What answers does Isaiah anticipate to the questions he asks about the LORD?
3. To whom does the LORD give strength?
4. What does the LORD say He will do for the one whom He will raise up from the east?
5. What does the LORD promise to do for Israel?
6. What does the LORD challenge the idols and false gods to do?
7. What will the Servant do?
8. What does the LORD say about His glory and His praise?
9. Why is Israel described as robbed, plundered, and imprisoned?

Lesson 13: The Servant is Obedient Amidst Suffering Isaiah 49:14-52:12

Memory: Isaiah 53:1-12

Hymn: “Stricken, Smitten, and Afflicted”

The LORD reaffirms His commitment to bring salvation to Israel. This salvation will be brought about by the Servant, who is completely obedient to the LORD. The prophet anticipates a day of vindication, ingathering, peace, and blessing for Israel and especially for Jerusalem.

1. How does the LORD answer the charge that He has forgotten and forsaken Zion?
2. How will Zion’s sons and daughters be returned?
3. How does the prophet describe the relationship between the Lord GOD and the Servant?
4. What opposition does the Servant encounter?
5. Why does the prophet mention Abraham and Sarah?
6. What comparison is made between the Servant’s salvation and the earth?
7. What happens to the cup of the LORD’S fury?
8. How will Jerusalem be redeemed?
9. What message will be brought to Zion’s watchmen?

Lesson 14: The Servant is a Sacrifice for Sin
Isaiah 52:13-55:13

Memory: Isaiah 53:1-12

Hymn: "Stricken, Smitten, and Afflicted"

The Servant will suffer the wrath of the LORD in order to justify His sinful people. The LORD will pour out His wrath upon the righteous Servant, crushing Him even unto death. After the LORD'S wrath is satisfied because of the sacrifice of the Servant, the LORD will prolong His days and exalt Him. The prophet invites his people to rejoice in the LORD'S salvation. He urges them to freely partake in salvation, and he calls them to repentance.

1. What does Isaiah say about the Servant's appearance?

2. Who will inflict punishment upon the Servant?

3. On whose behalf will the Servant suffer?

4. Why should the barren sing?

5. How long will the LORD'S wrath be upon His people and how long will His mercy be upon them?

6. What is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and from where is their righteousness?

7. What advice does the LORD give to the wicked?

8. How does the LORD explain the difference between His thoughts and the thoughts of His people?

9. What comparison is made between the rain and the Word of the LORD?

Lesson 15: Israel's Rebels and the LORD'S Salvation Isaiah 56-59

Memory: Isaiah 53:1-12

Hymn: "Stricken, Smitten, and Afflicted"

The prophet confronts the wickedness that is so prevalent in his nation, including rampant idolatry, injustice, and Sabbath-breaking. Israel's rebels will not thwart the LORD'S plan of salvation. Instead, the LORD will repay them according to their deeds and redeem the remnant of those who turn from transgression in Zion.

1. What man is blessed?
2. What message does the LORD give to the foreigner?
3. Why does the righteous man perish?
4. Why do the rebels of Israel have no fear of the LORD?
5. Who will possess the land and inherit the LORD'S holy mountain? With whom will the LORD dwell?
6. What is wrong with Israel's fasting? What kind of fast does the LORD choose?
7. What instructions does the LORD give for the Sabbath?
8. How are justice, righteousness, and salvation portrayed in the prayer which Isaiah records?
9. What actions does the LORD take in order to correct the hopeless situation described in the prayer?

Lesson 16: Zion Exalted above the Nations
Isaiah 60:1-63:6

Memory: Isaiah 53:1-12

Hymn: "Stricken, Smitten, and Afflicted"

When the LORD restores Jerusalem, she will be exalted and glorious. The LORD Himself will be the light of the city, and there will be no violence there. The Gentiles will bring tribute, and they will serve Zion. The people of Zion will be comforted and made righteous, and the LORD will delight in them. At this time the LORD will fight against His enemies as a warrior.

1. How will the Gentiles treat Zion when the glory of the LORD rises upon her?

2. What will happen to the nation or kingdom that refuses to serve Zion?

3. What will be the light-source of restored Zion?

4. What does the Servant proclaim, and how does He comfort those who mourn?

5. Why does the prophet rejoice greatly in the LORD?

6. The watchmen on the walls of Jerusalem will not keep silent until the LORD does what?

7. What names will be given to the city of Zion and her people?

8. Whose blood is sprinkled upon the garments of the LORD?

9. What year comes with the day of vengeance?

Lesson 17: The Repentant are Blessed in Jerusalem
Isaiah 63:7-66:24

Memory: Isaiah 53:1-12

Hymn: "Stricken, Smitten, and Afflicted"

Israel's rebels will be excluded from the restored Jerusalem. In fact, when the LORD pours out His blessing on Jerusalem, He will also pour out retribution on those who refuse to submit to Him. Those who participate in the LORD'S blessing of Jerusalem will be the repentant and contrite.

1. How does the LORD respond to His people's rebellion? Why does He return to them?

2. What requests are made in the prayer Isaiah records?

3. What confession of sin is made in the prayer Isaiah records?

4. How is the temple mentioned in the prayer?

5. How does the LORD characterize His people?

6. Who will receive the LORD'S blessing? How will the LORD deal with those who forsake Him and persist in rebellion?

7. How does the LORD describe the renewed Jerusalem?

8. Upon whom does the LORD look with favor?

9. What will the LORD do to His enemies?

The Book of Isaiah

