

Seeing Jesus in Every Story

**“You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life;
and these are they which testify of Me.”**

John 5:39

Act 11 Isaiah

Prologue

As we’ve already discovered, seeing life through a prophet’s eyes was not easy. The calling was accompanied by the enabling, but God’s prophets normally did not win any popularity contests. Sent forth with urgent messages of warning that contained graphic illustrations of what was to come, the prophet’s direction and decisions were not those of his own making. And neither was his destiny. When the “Wanted: A Prophet” posters went up, there weren’t long lines of applicants desiring the job. And the perks (or lack of them) was nothing to write home about. It was a pretty thankless lonely ministry, except for the overriding providence of God.

The back story . . .

Isaiah was God’s prophet during the time when the nation of Israel had been divided into two kingdoms—Israel in the north and Judah to the south. The messages contained in the sixty-six chapters are a record of visions given to him by God. They spanned the reign of four kings of Judah: Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah (1:1) at a time when society was in a tumultuous upheaval. The people had turned away from God and toward idolatry, looking for help from other nations. They had lost their spiritual compass and broken their covenant with Him.

The first few chapters of the book detail an unfaithful Israel and Judah, followed by warnings of judgment and a promise of future restoration from captivity. Why did all this happen? God’s chosen nation was to bear fruit and to uphold His law; but the fruit it bore was bad: God had “waited for a harvest of sweet grapes, but the grapes that grew were bitter” (Is. 5:2); hence, He determined to tear it down. Aggression from Syria finally destroyed the northern kingdom in 722 B.C., scattering the people throughout the empire.

The first third of the book denounces the sins of the people (1–6), the sins of the leadership (7–10), and the sins of the Gentile nations surrounding Judah and Israel (13–23). In chapter six, Isaiah answers the call of God to sound the alarm and announce the good news of salvation.

✿ Cast ✿

God – Prophet Isaiah – Messiah

Read Isaiah 5–6. Briefly note what stands out to you at first reading. Be prepared to share one of your impressions with your discussion group.

Scene 1: The Man – Isaiah 6:1–8

The name “Isaiah” means “salvation of the Lord.” This was a man in touch with God, who saw God’s Son, glimpsed God’s glory, and heard God’s message to His people. This man of God hated sin and religious pretense, often referring to God as the “Holy One of Israel.” He used strong language to awaken the people from their stagnant condition and awaken them to the reality that had overtaken them. He likened the nation of Israel to a people that had forsaken the Lord (1:4), whose body was diseased (1:5–6), a harlot (1:21), and a useless vineyard (Is. 5).

God called Isaiah and Isaiah called God’s people to repentance by boldly declaring God’s Word. He understood how to stir the imaginations of his listeners to attract their attention, arouse their interest, and teach them the truth. His aim was always to warn of the dangers ahead and to get the people to turn away from sin and back to God.

“In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple” (Is. 6:1). It’s difficult for us to appreciate the significance of King Uzziah’s death, but the end of his 52 year rule meant the end to society as the people knew it and a time of great anxiety and uncertainty about what was ahead. No one knew what the next king would be like, leaving the people to become fearful. But as Isaiah processed the end of an earthly king, he got a glimpse of a divine King.

1. Using Isaiah 6:1–8 as your text, in your own words briefly describe the following:
 - What Isaiah saw (6:1):
 - What Isaiah heard (6:2–4):
 - What Isaiah felt (6:6–7) and what this represented:
 - How Isaiah responded (6:8):
2. This newly called prophet was poised to speak the words of God; yet when he saw the holiness of God, what did he recognize about himself? How did this realization allow him to begin his ministry with a proper perspective?

Additional thoughts and observations

Fire in the Old Testament represents the holiness of God, which normally consumed and threatened in its fierceness; yet this white-hot coal of burning ember touched Isaiah’s lips not to destroy but to cleanse. Before the prophet could be sent forth to speak, he had to receive a cleansing touch from God. How might *you* interpret and apply this passage to your own life? You, too, need to get a fresh glimpse of God’s glory. You, too, need to get right with God. You, too, need to get a new perspective on how He wants to use you for His glory. Using Romans 12:1–2 as your compass . . . what do you learn is acceptable service to God?

Scene 2: The Messages – Selected References

As you study the book of Isaiah this week, you'll discover that the prophet wove words of hope throughout messages of judgment. We will be able to examine but a portion of the messages—excerpts from sixty-six chapters revealing that God's plan for the world includes a heavy emphasis on the personal message of God's forgiveness and redemption.

The best way to understand a big picture is to view it from up high. Work your way through the chart by taking off bite size chunks and chewing [meditating] for a while on your own. Isaiah wrote for a small nation of individuals but his words resounded throughout the New Testament too. Beneath each reference, jot down the highlight of your discovery.

	<u>Old Testament</u>	<u>New Testament</u>
Birth of Christ	Isaiah 7:14; 9:6 Isaiah 9:6	Matthew 1:21–23
Ministry of John the Baptist	Isaiah 40:1–6	Matthew 3:1–3
Christ's anointing	Isaiah 61:1–2	Luke 4:17–21
Messiah's rejection	Isaiah 6:9–11	John 12:37–40
Stone of stumbling	Isaiah 8:14; 28:16 Isaiah 28:16	Rom. 9:32–33; 10:11 1 Peter 2:6
Ministry to Gentiles	Isaiah 49:6	Luke 2:32; Acts 13:47
Savior's suffering and death	Isaiah 52:13–53:12	Acts 3:13; 8:32–33 1 Peter 2:21–25
Christ's resurrection	Isaiah 55:3	Acts 13:34
Coming reign as King	Isaiah 9:6–7; 11:1–2	Revelation 19:13–15

Explore key words and phrases

“Servant” is one of the key words used repeatedly in Isaiah’s message, most importantly in reference to the Son of God, Jesus Christ (Is. 42:1, 19; 52:13; and 53:11). Isaiah spoke of the Suffering Servant who would die for sinners and one day return as Conqueror to establish His earthly kingdom.

Phrase: “Day of the Lord” refers to a future time when the entire world will endure the wrath of God’s judgment. Isaiah often used graphic illustrations when speaking of future events.

“The Book of Consolation” was what the Jewish rabbis called Isaiah 40–66, intended to speak comfort to God’s people. Divided into three parts, each focuses on a person of the Godhead:

- Chapters 40–48 Greatness of God the Father
- Chapters 49–57 Grace of God the Son (God’s Suffering Servant)
- Chapters 58–66 Grace of God the Spirit poured out on God’s people in the future coming kingdom.

Additional thoughts and observations

In Isaiah 40:1, the prophet is commanded, “‘Comfort, yes, comfort My People!’ says your God.” The word in Hebrew means “to repent.” God brings His comfort to those who meet His condition of repentance. Jesus and John the Baptist emphasized repentance of sins throughout their ministries. What do the following passages say about the importance of repentance in God’s eyes?

‣ Acts 17:26–30

‣ 2 Peter 3:9

‣ The call to repentance in Peter’s epistle (v. 9) above prefaces an explanation of the coming “Day of the Lord.” What does it say in 2 Peter 3:10–13?

Scene 3: The Messiah – Isaiah 52:13–15 and 53:1–12

Isaiah's prophetic messages revealed more than what the future held. They also told the story of the good news of Jesus Christ. The very heart of the gospel message is found in the "Servant Song." These Old Testament verses are the most often quoted and referred to in the New Testament. They reveal a picture of the Messiah that is as astonishing as it is awe-inspiring. Take a closer look at the stanzas of the hymn to determine what is revealed about Jesus Christ.

- His exaltation: (52:13–15)
- His earthly life: (53:1–3)
- His sacrifice for sin: (53:4–6)
- His silent submission: (53:7–9)
- His suffering from God's point of view: (53:10–12)
- Looking over the above passages as a whole, what aspects do you think the people of Isaiah's day would have found challenging to believe?

The Suffering Servant's work on the cross resulted in satisfaction (Is. 53:11). This does not mean that the Father took pleasure in seeing His beloved Son suffer. Rather that He was pleased the Son's obedience accomplished the redemption planned from eternity past. How?

Because God is holy, He cannot ignore sin—it is contrary to His character and law. He must judge sin. Yet He loves sinners and in His grace and mercy desires to forgive them. He solved the dilemma by taking upon Himself the sin(s) of mankind, satisfying the demands of His holy law. And because of the Servant's obedient sacrifice, God can forgive all who come to His Son by faith. "He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities" (53:11).

What additional insight do you gain from the following verses?

- 1 Peter 1:20
- John 8:29
- Philippians 2:8
- John 19:30

Intermission: Pause – Ponder – Pray

**But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities;
The chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.
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.**

Isaiah 53:5–6

As you memorize this passage, let it work into your heart and mind. Scripture meditation is like a good cup of tea . . . satisfying as it is savored. So give yourself time to savor God's Word. Write the scripture in the space provided and meditate on what it says.

Ask the Lord to open your eyes and increase your understanding. Jot down what He points out to you; keep returning here and adding your thoughts throughout the week.

Ponder what this says about God. Consider His character, attributes, work, promises . . .

Consider for a moment that Jesus didn't die because of anything He had done—but because of what we have done. Notice the emphasis in verses 5–6 on the plural pronouns: *our transgressions, our iniquities, our peace, we are healed; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of **us all***. How would possessing an understanding of this truth affect your perspective in daily life?

Write your response to Him in worship and praise . . .

Epilogue: Seeing Jesus in the Story

Search to See . . .

Like much of the Old Testament prophecy we see in the Bible, some of Isaiah's prophecies were fulfilled during his lifetime, some at the time of Christ, and some are yet to be fulfilled. There aren't just one—two—or three places in Isaiah where we see Jesus—He is visible on every page! If you haven't seen Him, you haven't been looking.

The Book of Isaiah opens with the presentation of the Divine King who issues a call to ministry and Isaiah appropriately responds. From there Isaiah unveils the Suffering Servant who brings forth the good news of God's salvation for all peoples. Toward the end of his prophecies (chapters 55–66), Isaiah introduces us to the Coming Conqueror who will rule God's kingdom forever. And it is here that we see an invitation to all to respond to this good news.

1. What do you see in the following passages about the person and work of this coming conqueror?
 - Isaiah 61:1–3
 - Isaiah 63:1–6
2. When Jesus came as Suffering Servant, He quoted the words of Isaiah 61:1–3. Identify the location and event where this took place, noting its significance. See Luke 4:16–21.
3. According to Revelation 19:5–16, when will our Conqueror fulfill the above prophecies in Isaiah 61 and 63?

Make it personal

Take a moment to read through **Isaiah 55:1–13**, the beautiful invitation to return to the Lord . . .

*Incline your ear—**come** to Me*

***Hear** and your soul shall **live** (v. 3)*

***Seek** the Lord while He may be found*

***Call** upon Him while He is near (v. 6)*

Return** to the Lord, and He will have **mercy

*He will **abundantly pardon** (v. 7)*

Look to Me, and be saved, all you ends of the earth!

***For I am God, and there is no other** (Isaiah 45:22)*

*Come now, and **let us** reason together, says the Lord, though **your sins** are like scarlet, they shall be **white as snow**; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If you are willing and obedient . . . (Isaiah 1:18–19a) How will **you** respond? Write your response below.*

This image shows a full page of blank, lined paper. It features approximately 28 horizontal grey lines spaced evenly apart, typical of notebook paper. The lines extend across the entire width of the page, leaving small margins at the top and bottom. There are no vertical lines, text, or other markings on the page.