

<u>Isaiah 1-5</u> Introduction How can one be spared judgement and live happily ever after?	<u>Isaiah 6-39</u> New Creation God will rule over a new, perfect and eternal creation	<u>Isaiah 40-55</u> New relationship God will restore his people from exile to a permanent relationship	<u>Isaiah 56-66</u> Who God will choose the humble and reject the proud
--	---	--	--

Isaiah 40-55 explained in under 60 seconds:
youtu.be/z-S3q76crLM

Isaiah 40-48
'I'm coming to get you!'
 YHWH tells his people he will act to fix their relationship

Isaiah 49-55
'Here's the plan!'
 YHWH's suffering servant will bear the penalty for sin, permanently fixing their relationship

Isaiah 54:1-55:13 (NIVUK)

54 'Sing, barren woman,
 you who never bore a child;
 burst into song, shout for joy,
 you who were never in labour;
 because more are the children of the desolate woman
 than of her who has a husband,' says the LORD.

² 'Enlarge the place of your tent,
 stretch your tent curtains wide, do not hold back;
 lengthen your cords, strengthen your stakes.

³ For you will spread out to the right and to the left;
 your descendants will dispossess nations
 and settle in their desolate cities.

⁴ 'Do not be afraid; you will not be put to shame.
 Do not fear disgrace; you will not be humiliated.
 You will forget the shame of your youth
 and remember no more the reproach of your widowhood.

⁵ For your Maker is your husband –
 the LORD Almighty is his name –
 the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer;
 he is called the God of all the earth.

⁶ The LORD will call you back
 as if you were a wife deserted and distressed in spirit –
 a wife who married young,
 only to be rejected,' says your God.

⁷ 'For a brief moment I abandoned you,
 but with deep compassion I will bring you back.

⁸ In a surge of anger I hid my face from you for a moment,
 but with everlasting kindness I will have compassion on you,'
 says the LORD your Redeemer.

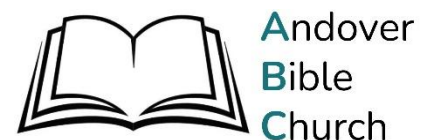
⁹ 'To me this is like the days of Noah,
 when I swore that the waters of Noah
 would never again cover the earth.
 So now I have sworn not to be angry with you,

Sunday 29 March 2026

1. 'Here's our brilliant promised relationship!' (54:1-17)

Scene #1: no more childlessness
 exiled & shamed people will be
 restored & great

Scene #2: married to God
 an unbreakable relationship



Isaiah 49-55 'Here's the plan!'

YHWH appoints JC who will bear the penalty for sin,
permanently fixing their relationship
(JC = Jacob's Champion = Jesus Christ)

49:1-13

JC will accomplish
God's global
salvation

49:14-50:3

'I haven't
forgotten you – I
will restore you!'

50:4-11

JC will suffer but
will ultimately be
vindicated

never to rebuke you again.

¹⁰ Though the mountains be shaken
and the hills be removed,
yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken
nor my covenant of peace be removed,
says the LORD, who has compassion on you.

¹¹ 'Afflicted city, lashed by storms and not comforted,
I will rebuild you with stones of turquoise,^a
your foundations with lapis lazuli.

¹² I will make your battlements of rubies,
your gates of sparkling jewels,
and all your walls of precious stones.

¹³ All your children will be taught by the LORD,
and great will be their peace.

¹⁴ In righteousness you will be established:
tyranny will be far from you;
you will have nothing to fear.

Terror will be far removed;
it will not come near you.

¹⁵ If anyone does attack you, it will not be my doing;
whoever attacks you will surrender to you.

¹⁶ 'See, it is I who created the blacksmith
who fans the coals into flame
and forges a weapon fit for its work.

And it is I who have created the destroyer to wreak havoc;

¹⁷ no weapon forged against you will prevail,
and you will refute every tongue that accuses you.

This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD,
and this is their vindication from me,' declares the LORD.

55 'Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters;
and you who have no money, come, buy and eat!

Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost.

² Why spend money on what is not bread,
and your labour on what does not satisfy?

Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good,
and you will delight in the richest of fare.

Scene #3: city protected by God
life without danger or threats

Literal vs metaphor

1. Isaiah uses vivid imagery: are you clear what is *metaphor* and what is *literal promise* in this passage?
2. How does Isaiah's imagery amplify God's promises?

2. 'So will you come back to me?'
(55:1-13)

- 'come to my lavish
celebration!'

^a The meaning of the Hebrew for this word is uncertain.

<u>51:1-8</u> 'I will restore you permanently!'	<u>51:9-52:12</u> 'I should wake up? No, you should wake up, to your wonderful future!'	<u>52:13-53:12</u> JC will bear God's wrath for the sins of many	<u>54:1-17</u> 'You will flourish in a safe and secure relationship with me!'	<u>55:1-13</u> 'So, will you come back to me?'
--	--	---	--	---

³ Give ear and come to me;
listen, that you may live.

- 'come to the blessings of the great Davidic-King (JC)!'

I will make an everlasting covenant with you,
my faithful love promised to David.

⁴ See, I have made him a witness to the peoples,
a ruler and commander of the peoples.

⁵ Surely you will summon nations you know not,
and nations you do not know will come running to you,
because of the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel,
for he has endowed you with splendour.'

⁶ Seek the LORD while he may be found;
call on him while he is near.

- 'come while the offer still stands!'

⁷ Let the wicked forsake their ways
and the unrighteous their thoughts.

Let them turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on them,
and to our God, for he will freely pardon.

⁸ 'For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways,' declares the LORD.

- 'you cannot imagine how good it will be!'

⁹ 'As the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.

¹⁰ As the rain and the snow come down from heaven,
and do not return to it without watering the earth
and making it bud and flourish,
so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater,

- 'I will certainly make it happen!'

¹¹ so is my word that goes out from my mouth:
it will not return to me empty,
but will accomplish what I desire
and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.

'Come to Jesus'

Isaiah often tells us *what God will do*, but in 55:1-13 he mainly calls for a *response*.

1. What do you make of this shift?
2. What do you initially find compelling about God's invitation?

¹² You will go out in joy
and be led forth in peace;

- 2nd Exodus:

the mountains and hills will burst into song before you,
and all the trees of the field will clap their hands.

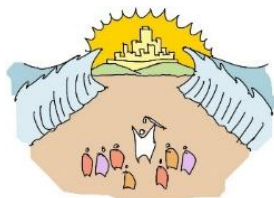
- YHWH leading
- creation praise

¹³ Instead of the thorn-bush will grow the juniper,
and instead of briars the myrtle will grow.

➤ verdant wilderness

This will be for the LORD's renown,
for an everlasting sign,
that will endure for ever.'

➤ enduring and eternal outcome



For reflection on Isaiah 54-55

- 54:1-4 1. How do you feel about the way Isaiah describes the transformation from *barrenness* to *bearing many children*?
2. How do you visualise the instruction to ‘enlarge the place of your tent’?
- 54:5-10 3. How do you feel about Isaiah’s use of the *marriage* metaphor?
4. In what way(s) do you find the *brief anger vs everlasting kindness* contrast encouraging?
5. What assumed associations does God’s promise to Noah evoke? How are they helpful?
- 54:11-17 6. How do you visualise God’s city in these verses?
7. How do you feel about God’s promise to protect his people from enemies?
8. How do you connect the themes of *physical safety* with *relationship with God*?
- 55:1-2 9. To what extent do you instinctively see God as *lavishly generous in blessing*?
10. In God’s invitation to his lavish feast, what details caught your eye? Why?
- 55:3-5 11. What assumed associations does God’s promise to David evoke?
12. How do you connect the themes of *David-King* to *relationship with God*?
- 55:6-7 13. What do you appreciate about the way Isaiah wrote these verses?
14. Are there unrighteous things you are reluctant to turn away from? Why?
- 55:8-9 15. How do you instinctively compare God’s thoughts to yours?
16. How does Isaiah’s imagery draw you back to God?
- 55:10-11 17. How does God’s control of rain and crops assure you of the certainty of God’s promised new creation?
- 55:12-13 18. How do you feel about these specific 2nd Exodus ideas?
19. How do you feel about the accumulation of 2nd Exodus references in Isaiah 40-55?
- Prayer 20. Where do you need to repent or pray?
21. How might your church family help you to keep turning back to God daily?

Isaiah 40-55 Bible-handling Q&A

1. How would you describe the genre of Isaiah 40-55? How might that fit the *Art Gallery* analogy?
In galleries and museums, in addition to paintings (Isaiah 1-39) you might get a film played (Isaiah 40-55). Chapters 40-55 work like a play, with the main speaking part being YHWH, with Isaiah having a speaking role, and an exiled Judah on stage in a non-speaking role.
2. Isaiah 40-55 repeats certain themes over and over. What might the function be of this literary choice?
In a relational setting, people tend to repeat themselves. In a relationship where trust needs to be rebuilt, the person saying ‘trust me!’ might repeat themselves even more!
3. How does Isaiah use the theme of idols in Isaiah 40-55? Some preachers indicate *rebuke* – to what extent do you agree with this? *Not so much rebuke, but perhaps in a reassuring and gentle tone, ‘why settle for those idols over there? I’m far better for you!’*