

Isaiah 1-5 Introduction How can one be spared judgement and live happily ever after?	Isaiah 6-39 New Creation God will rule over a new, perfect and eternal creation	Isaiah 40-55 New relationship God will restore his people from exile to a permanent relationship	Isaiah 56-66 Who God will choose the humble and reject the proud
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Isaiah 56:1-57:21 (NIVUK)

Sunday 5 April 2026

56 This is what the LORD says:

‘Maintain justice and do what is right,
for my salvation is close at hand
and my righteousness will soon be revealed.

² Blessed is the one who does this –
the person who holds it fast,
who keeps the Sabbath without desecrating it,
and keeps their hands from doing any evil.’

³ Let no foreigner who is bound to the LORD say,
‘The LORD will surely exclude me from his people.’

And let no eunuch complain,
‘I am only a dry tree.’

⁴ For this is what the LORD says:

‘To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths,
who choose what pleases me
and hold fast to my covenant –

⁵ to them I will give within my temple and its walls
a memorial and a name better than sons and daughters;

I will give them an everlasting name
that will endure for ever.

⁶ And foreigners who bind themselves to the LORD
to minister to him,

to love the name of the LORD,
and to be his servants,

all who keep the Sabbath without desecrating it
and who hold fast to my covenant –

⁷ these I will bring to my holy mountain
and give them joy in my house of prayer.

Their burnt offerings and sacrifices
will be accepted on my altar;

for my house will be called
a house of prayer for all nations.’

⁸ The Sovereign LORD declares –
he who gathers the exiles of Israel:

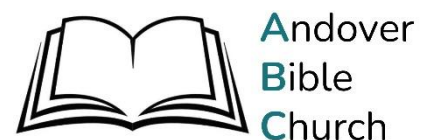
‘I will gather still others to them
besides those already gathered.’

1. Outsiders who honour God can be included (56:1-8)

- ‘salvation is close!’
- ‘I will honour those who truly honour me, rather than lip-service!’
- ‘foreigners and eunuchs can come to my eternal presence!’

Deuteronomy 23:1 (ESVUK)
‘No one whose testicles are crushed or whose male organ is cut off shall enter the assembly of the LORD.’

Previous exclusion
Discuss the *excludedness* of the foreigner and eunuch, and how an OT Israelite who knew the law of Moses might feel after hearing these verses.



Isaiah 56-66
Who gets in?
Where do they end up?

<u>56:1-8</u> Any humble 'outsider'	<u>56:9-57:21</u> The lowly and contrite, even if extremely wicked	<u>58:1-14</u> The selfless, not the selfish	<u>59:1-21</u> Jews who acknowledge their many sins	<u>60:1-22</u> In wealth, comfort and luxury	<u>61:1-11</u> With no more sadness	<u>62:1-12</u> In a secure relationship with God
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2a. Despite God's people being extremely wicked... (56:9-57:13a)

- 'Israel's leaders are completely useless!'

- 'you're so unjust that death is sweet release for good guys!'

- 'you sons of whores mock me?!'

- 'you have orgies and child burning!!'

- 'you have idols in the valleys'

⁹ Come, all you beasts of the field, come and devour, all you beasts of the forest!

¹⁰ Israel's watchmen are blind, they all lack knowledge; they are all mute dogs, they cannot bark; they lie around and dream, they love to sleep.

¹¹ They are dogs with mighty appetites; they never have enough. They are shepherds who lack understanding; they all turn to their own way, they seek their own gain.

¹² 'Come,' each one cries, 'let me get wine! Let us drink our fill of beer! And tomorrow will be like today, or even far better.'

57 The righteous perish, and no one takes it to heart; the devout are taken away, and no one understands that the righteous are taken away to be spared from evil.

² Those who walk uprightly enter into peace; they find rest as they lie in death.

³ 'But you – come here, you children of a sorceress, you offspring of adulterers and prostitutes!

⁴ Who are you mocking? At whom do you sneer and stick out your tongue? Are you not a brood of rebels, the offspring of liars?

⁵ You burn with lust among the oaks and under every spreading tree; you sacrifice your children in the ravines and under the overhanging crags.

⁶ The idols among the smooth stones of the ravines are your portion; indeed, they are your lot.

Yes, to them you have poured out drink offerings and offered grain offerings.

In view of all this, should I relent?

<u>63:1-6</u> On YHWH's side, after he executes his enemies	<u>63:7-64:12</u> Those who pray like Isaiah's model humble prayer	<u>65:1-16</u> The humble, not the proud	<u>65:17-25</u> In a wonderful New Creation (compilation!)	<u>66:1-6</u> Those with humility, not external religion	<u>66:7-14</u> In YHWH's peace and flourishing	<u>66:15-24</u> On the right side of YHWH's judgement day
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- ⁷ You have made your bed on a high and lofty hill;
there you went up to offer your sacrifices.
- ⁸ Behind your doors and your doorposts
you have put your pagan symbols.
Forsaking me, you uncovered your bed,
you climbed into it and opened it wide;
you made a pact with those whose beds you love,
and you looked with lust on their naked bodies.
- ⁹ You went to Molek^a with olive oil
and increased your perfumes.
You sent your ambassadors^b far away;
you descended to the very realm of the dead!
- ¹⁰ You wearied yourself by such going about,
but you would not say, "It is hopeless."
You found renewal of your strength,
and so you did not faint.
- ¹¹ 'Whom have you so dreaded and feared
that you have not been true to me,
and have neither remembered me
nor taken this to heart?
Is it not because I have long been silent
that you do not fear me?
- ¹² I will expose your righteousness and your works,
and they will not benefit you.
- ¹³ When you cry out for help,
let your collection of idols save you!
The wind will carry all of them off,
a mere breath will blow them away.
- But whoever takes refuge in me will inherit the land
and possess my holy mountain.'
- ¹⁴ And it will be said:
'Build up, build up, prepare the road!
Remove the obstacles out of the way of my people.'
- 'you *have* idols in the mountains'
- 'you *have* idols in your homes'
- 'there's no end to your cheating!'
- 'and you're going to other kings too!'
- 'you even persisted when tired!'
- 'why didn't you fear me?!'
- 'did my not-yet-judging-you make you think I would never judge?!'
- 'when my judgement comes...'
- '...let your idols save you!'
- 2b. ...God will have mercy on those who are contrite and lowly (57:13b-21)**
- 2nd Exodus highway
cf. 40:3-5; 43:18-21; 49:8-13

^a Or to the king

^b Or idols

- 'those of you who are lowly and contrite can live with me!'

¹⁵ For this is what the high and exalted One says – he who lives for ever, whose name is holy:

'I live in a high and holy place, but also with the one who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.

- 'my current anger is only temporary!'

¹⁶ I will not accuse them for ever, nor will I always be angry, for then they would faint away because of me – the very people I have created.

¹⁷ I was enraged by their sinful greed; I punished them, and hid my face in anger, yet they kept on in their wilful ways.

- 'I will heal despite their sin!'

¹⁸ I have seen their ways, but I will heal them; I will guide them and restore comfort to Israel's mourners, ¹⁹ creating praise on their lips.

Peace, peace, to those far and near,' says the LORD. 'And I will heal them.'

- 'BUT no healing for the unrepentantly wicked!!'

²⁰ But the wicked are like the tossing sea, which cannot rest, whose waves cast up mire and mud.

²¹ 'There is no peace,' says my God, 'for the wicked.'

Colourful language

To what extent do we want to downplay the graphic language God uses to describe sin?

For reflection on Isaiah 56-57

- 56:1-8
1. In what ways are these verses scandalous to an OT Israelite who knew the law of Moses?
 2. If you are from a Gentile background, how do you feel about these verses?
 3. What do you make of the descriptions of honouring God in 56:6? (bind oneself to YHWH, minister to him, to love YHWH's name)
 4. Sketch who you would consider an 'outsider' today. Why do you consider them excluded? And how do these verses challenge you?

- 56:9-57:21
5. What OT Israelite sensibilities might these verses offend?
 6. What particular descriptions of Judah's sin caught your eye? Why?
 7. Why are we tempted to downplay the graphic language God uses to describe sin?
 8. How do you feel about God's grace from 57:13b?
 9. How does Isaiah's use of language help you feel the depth of God's grace from 57:13b?

- Prayer
10. Where do you need to repent or pray?
 11. How might your church family help you?