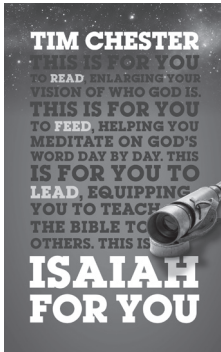




Here is your God

Isaiah

by Tim Chester



Isaiah For You

If you are reading *Isaiah For You* alongside this Good Book Guide, here is how the studies in this booklet link to the chapters of *Isaiah For You*:

Study One → Ch 1	Study Five → Ch 7
Study Two → Ch 2	Study Six → Ch 8
Study Three → Ch 5	Study Seven → Ch 11
Study Four → Ch 6	Study Eight → Ch 12

Find out more about *Isaiah For You* at:
www.thegoodbook.com/for-you
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Here is your God

The Good Book Guide to Isaiah

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Introduction: Good Book Guides

Every Bible-study group is different—yours may take place in a church building, in a home or in a cafe, on a train, over a leisurely mid-morning coffee or squashed into a 30-minute lunch break. Your group may include new Christians, mature Christians, non-Christians, mums and tots, students, businessmen or teens. That's why we've designed these *Good Book Guides* to be flexible for use in many different situations.

Our aim in each session is to uncover the meaning of a passage, and see how it fits into the “big picture” of the Bible. But that can never be the end. We also need to appropriately apply what we have discovered to our lives. Let's take a look at what is included:

- ☞ **Talkabout:** Most groups need to “break the ice” at the beginning of a session, and here's the question that will do that. It's designed to get people talking around a subject that will be covered in the course of the Bible study.
- ↓ **Investigate:** The Bible text for each session is broken up into manageable chunks, with questions that aim to help you understand what the passage is about. The **Leader's Guide** contains **guidance for questions**, and sometimes ☑ additional “follow-up” questions.
- 🗉 **Explore more (optional):** These questions will help you connect what you have learned to other parts of the Bible, so you can begin to fit it all together like a jigsaw; or occasionally look at a part of the passage that's not dealt with in detail in the main study.
- ➡ **Apply:** As you go through a Bible study, you'll keep coming across **apply** sections. These are questions to get the group discussing what the Bible teaching means in practice for you and your church. 🗉 **Getting personal** is an opportunity for you to think, plan and pray about the changes that you personally may need to make as a result of what you have learned.
- ↑ **Pray:** We want to encourage prayer that is rooted in God's word—in line with his concerns, purposes and promises. So each session ends with an opportunity to review the truths and challenges highlighted by the Bible study, and turn them into prayers of request and thanksgiving.

The **Leader's Guide** and introduction provide historical background information, explanations of the Bible texts for each session, ideas for **optional extra** activities, and guidance on how best to help people uncover the truths of God's word.

Why study Isaiah?

Isaiah can seem somewhat intimidating. For one thing it's a big book covering an extended timescale. Sometimes we're immersed in the politics of Isaiah's day; sometimes he's responding to events 100 or so years in the future. It's full of unfamiliar names and places, all set in a very different culture. Large sections may feel like alien territory.

But the book of Isaiah is full of good news and it's news worth shouting about.

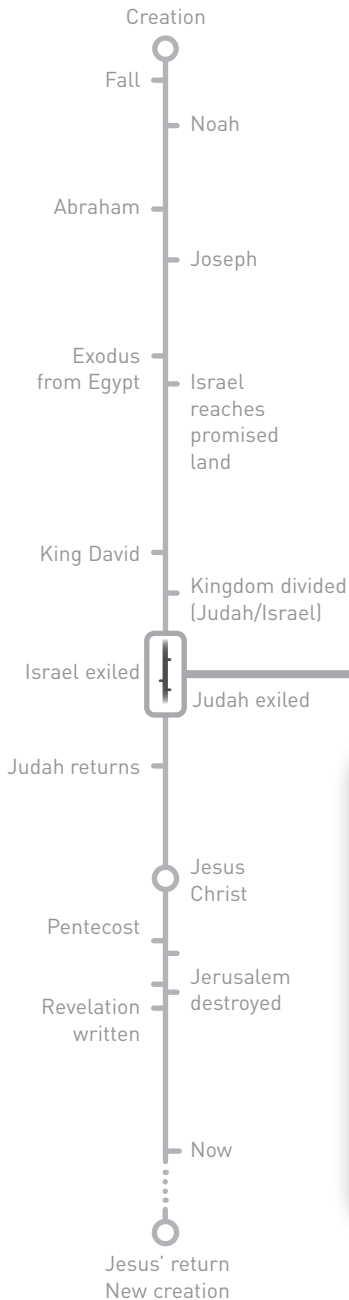
Isaiah's ministry begins around 739 BC, "the year that King Uzziah died" (6:1). After an initial "overture" in chapters 1 – 6, we see Isaiah addressing King Ahaz of Judah, inviting him to trust God rather than form an alliance with Assyria (7 – 12). Chapters 13 – 27 contain a series of addresses to various nations, reminding us that the Lord reigns and one day he will restore his reign upon the earth. In 28 – 39 we encounter a different political situation: by now the king is Hezekiah, who reigned 729-686 BC, and the Assyrians have become Judah's greatest threat.

Isaiah also looks beyond his own lifetime, especially in chapters 40 – 66. In 587 BC the Babylonians would defeat Judah and destroy Jerusalem, leading many of its people away into captivity. Isaiah addresses these exiles, promising that God will gather his people home. It's a promise fulfilled in Christ, who leads people from all nations home to a new heavens and a new earth.

The book of Isaiah comforts our fears and sorrows by pointing us to the rest and peace that come from entrusting ourselves to God. It excites us about the church by giving a vision of God's people as a community of justice which brings light to the world. And it fuels our commitment to mission by painting a compelling picture of God gathering people from the four corners of the world.

Most importantly, Isaiah points forward all the time to the coming of Jesus. More than any other Old Testament book, Isaiah forms a bridge between the Old Testament and New.

These eight studies do not look at every part of the book of Isaiah. They are more like a highlights tour—they will help you to understand the shape of the book and see how its main themes work together. As you read it, Isaiah will enlarge your view of God, enrich your love for Christ and sharpen your understanding of salvation. It will provide you with what Isaiah promises in 33:6: a sure foundation for our times.



BIBLE TIMELINE

Where does the book of Isaiah fit into the whole story of God's word?

ISAIAH

- 739 BC — Isaiah begins his ministry
- 734 BC — Israel and Aram threaten Judah
- 701 BC — Assyrians besiege Jerusalem
- 587 BC — Judah exiled into Babylon



1

Isaiah 6

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY



talkabout

1. The American theologian A.W. Tozer once said: “What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us”. Do you think that’s true? Why, or why not?



investigate

▶ Read Isaiah 6:1-5

Isaiah 1 – 5 previews some of the key themes in the book, with warnings of God’s judgment on the people’s wickedness balanced by expressions of God’s love and visions of a glorious future. But Isaiah 6 is the chapter which really defines Isaiah’s ministry—which is why we are starting here.

The chapter begins by locating this vision at a particular moment in history. King Uzziah’s reign was a golden age of peace and prosperity, but now the winds of change were blowing. Uzziah had died and the Assyrian Empire was like a dark cloud on the horizon.

2. What does Isaiah see in verse 1? What word would you use to sum up this description of God?

DICTIONARY

Seraphim (v 2):
angels.

Thresholds (v 4):
entrances.

Woe (v 5): sorrow.

3. What else does Isaiah see and hear, in verses 2-4?

• What does this tell us about God?



explore more

optional

➤ Read Exodus 19:16-22

This is another encounter with God. What similarities are there to Isaiah's encounter?

How do you think it felt to encounter God like this?

God's holiness is not so much an attribute of God as it is the perfection and intensity of all his other attributes: his love, power, purity, wisdom and justice. Our God is a consuming fire, burning with the intensity of his holiness like the burning centre of a star. Anything tainted by sin is consumed in the presence of his powerful purity and perfect love. This explains why Isaiah reacts as he does in verse 5.

➤ Read Isaiah 5:8-30

4. Who has Isaiah already declared woe to and why?

DICTIONARY

Desolate (v 8): abandoned.

Bath (v 10): about 22 litres.

Homer (v 10): about 160 kilograms.

Ephah (v 10): about 16 kilograms.

Pasture (v 17): field where sheep graze.

Acquit (v 23): declare innocent.

Flint (v 28): a very hard stone.



5. But who does he now declare woe to and why (6:5)?



getting personal

“That’ll do” may be fine for household chores. But the one area where “that’ll do” will certainly not do is holiness. When it comes to obeying God there is no room for half-measures—not when you see the holiness of God.

Is there any area in which you are saying “that’ll do” about sin?

How will you respond to God’s holiness?



apply

6. How does this passage challenge our assumptions about what God is like and what it is like to come into his presence?



investigate

Read Isaiah 6:6-13

The coal which the angel touches to Isaiah’s lips symbolises the altar—the place of sacrifice, where an animal symbolically took on a person’s guilt and died in their place.

7. What happens when the coal touches Isaiah’s lips?

DICTIONARY

Live (v 6): burning.

Atoned for (v 7): resolved, forgiven.

Calloused (v 10): rough and hard.

Forsaken (v 12): abandoned.

Terebinth (v 13): a type of tree.



- What links can you spot between this and the way Christ has atoned for his followers' sin?

8. What do you think is going through Isaiah's head as he says, "Here am I. Send me!"?

9. What is Isaiah's job going to be (v 9-10)?

- How will his hearers respond?

10. What is the bad news in verses 11-13?



But there is good news too. The people are not hardened for ever. A “holy seed” will remain: there is the possibility of new growth. It’s a theme that re-emerges in Isaiah 11:1, where a shoot will come from the stump of Jesse—the father of King David, Israel’s greatest king.

So a chapter that began with the death of one king ends with the promise of another. Out of the wastes of the impending judgment, the promised messianic King will come. Isaiah’s ministry is part of this promise. He looks forward to the ultimate coming of Christ.

➤ **Read Isaiah 52:13-15**

11. Isaiah 52 describes the coming of Jesus. How does verse 15 resolve the problem in Isaiah 6:9-10?

DICTIONARY

Disfigured, marred (v 14): damaged.

Sprinkle (v 15): when blood was sprinkled on things, it was a sign that they had been cleansed or become holy.

- What does this tell us about how people come to saving faith?

➔ **apply**

12. What things can hold you back from being as willing as Isaiah to obey God’s call? How could Isaiah’s experience spur you on?





getting personal

What specific thing might God be calling you to do?

What would it look like to say, "Here am I. Send me?"



pray

Use the angels' song and Isaiah's responses as a framework for your prayers.