

# Isaiah: The Fifth Gospel — Week 2: Themes in Isaiah; Isaiah 1–12

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## Themes

- YHWH as the Holy One of Israel
  - Isa 6 as paradigmatic
  - “Holy One of Israel” appears 25 times in the book
  - Israel called from the exodus to be a holy nation — Exod 19:6 Kingdom of priests, holy nation — Lev 19:2 – Be holy, as I am holy
  - Israel in Isaiah’s day was very unclean
- YHWH as Savior and Redeemer
  - YHWH saves his people to display his greatness to the nations (52:7-10, 49:25-26)
  - YHWH saves his people because he is their father (Isa 1:2; 45:11; 63:16)
  - YHWH is *go’el* (Redeemer), mainly in Isa 40–66
  - Just as YHWH redeemed Israel from Egypt, so also he will redeem them from bondage in Babylon.
  - They were sold for nothing, so they will be redeemed without money (Isa 52:3)
- Remnant — How YHWH remains faithful to his holiness and his covenant — Isa 10:20–22; 11:11, 16; 28:5; 37:4, 31–32; 46:3; 65:8 (grapes left in the cluster)
- Universality of YHWH (God of all nations) — 11:10; 42:1–9; 56:1–8; 65–66
- Polemics against the nations — Isa 10; 13–23; 46; 47; 59
- Davidic rulers — Mainly in 1–39. In Isa 40–55, replaced by the Servant; in 56–66, YHWH himself is the king/ruler. Incarnational typology: Jesus fulfills all three (he is Messiah, Servant, and God Himself)
- The Servant of YHWH 41:1–4; 49:1–6; 50:4–9; 52:13–53:12; 61:1–3
  - Frequently thought of as being relegated to Isaiah 40–66 (Servant Songs)
  - but actually present implicitly throughout the whole book: the remnant fulfills the role of “servant” even as the nation failed to do so in Isa 1–39
  - Of course, Christian interpreters see Jesus as the true Servant — typological (and possibly redemptive-historical) reading of Isa
- The Spirit of YHWH
  - From the beginning, the *ruach yhwh* was involved in creation (Gen 1:2)
  - Spirit gives wisdom and understanding (Isa 11:2)
  - Spirit proclaims the good news of YHWH’s salvation (Isa 61:1)
  - Spirit makes possible the announcement of the purposes of YHWH (Isa 48:16)
  - Spirit is involved in re-creation out of chaos (32:15; 34:16–35:2; 59:21–60:2; 63:10–14)
  - Out of moral chaos, the Spirit brings order and justice (28:6, 42:1, 44:3)
- YHWH’s rule over history
  - 1–39, YHWH asserts sovereignty over the nations
  - The nations move at his bidding
  - 40–66 exults in the prophecies regarding the nations, being fulfilled
  - YHWH’s rule is in contrast with the Mesopotamian gods, who lied, schemed, seduced, deceived, made war on each other—essentially, glorified human beings.
  - The God of Isaiah is sharply different: he faces no contingency or surprise, and he but speaks to affect his will.
- Reliance on YHWH rather than on temporal powers — Isa 7–8; 19–20; 28–33; 45; 59

## Context(s)

- Chronology of Isaiah ben-Amoz
  - Isaiah likely knew the work of earlier prophets such as Amos and Micah
  - 745: Tiglath-Pileser III of Assyria rises to power
  - 740/39: Death of Uzziah (Azariah) of Judah (Isa 6:1)
  - 735: Syro-Ephraim crisis. Syria and NK try to recruit Ahaz to fight with them against Assyria (Isa 7–10)
  - 722: Fall of NK to Assyria
  - 705: Death of Sargon II of Assyria
  - 701: Hezekiah rebels, but Sennacherib invades all Judah except Jerusalem (Isa 36–37)
- Later relevant dates
  - 612–609: Defeat of Assyria by Babylon
  - 598: Babylon prevails in Judah
  - 587: Zedekiah rebels, temple destroyed, exile to Babylon
  - 539: Cyrus II (the Great) of Persia defeats Babylon (Isa 44–45)
  - c. 520–515: Second Temple built
  - 332: Alexander the Great conquers Persian Empire

## Isaiah 1–12

Prophetic/poetic oracles tend to be coupled with narratives. In this case, 1–5 goes with 6, and 9–12 goes with 7–8. Judgment and hope alternate; two narratives nestled in the middle; two songs of salvation at the end.

- 1 – Judgment, covenant lawsuit
- 2:1–5 – Hope! YHWH, the Torah, the nations
- 2:5–4:1 – Judgment, chaos
- 4:2–6 – Hope! The Branch
- 5 – Judgment, vineyard
- 6 – Commissioning narrative, hardening. Why doesn't the commissioning come in chapter 1?
- 7:1–8:10 – Salvation, Immanuel, judgment, remnant
- 8:11–22 – hardening, judgment
- 9:1–7 – Hope! The Ruler-Child
- 9:8–10:4 – Judgment, division among tribes
- 10:5–19 – Arrogance of the king of Assyria
- 10:20–27 – Hope! The Remnant will return
- 10:28–34 – Judgment on Assyria
- 11:1–16 – Hope! The Branch, the nations will come, tribal divisions overcome
- 12:1–3; 4–6 – Two songs to sing in the day of salvation

Structure and themes of Isaiah 1–12 are replicated in 13–27, and 28–39 (next week).

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### The Ransomed of the Lord

Janis Baumstein

The Ransomed of the Lord shall come singing Hallelujah,  
Gathered 'round at Zion, Praising God's Name.  
Everlasting Joy shall be upon their heads,  
No more sorrow, sadness or shame.<sup>1</sup>

Break forth unto joy,<sup>2</sup> City of Jerusalem.  
Fear not Sons of Israel, Messiah has come.

They come with Joyful shouting, singing Hallelujah,  
Nations of the world rejoice, free from all blame.  
Children laughing, lifting up their hands in Praise,  
Old men clapping, Blessing God's Name.<sup>3</sup>

The Remnant of God's People come singing Hallelujah,  
Dance before the Lord in song Praising God's Name.  
Lion and the Lamb shall graze together,  
Leopard and the wolf will be tame.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Isa 35:10//51:11

<sup>2</sup> Isa 14:7; 44:23; 49:13; 52:9; 54:1; 55:12

<sup>3</sup> 65:20

<sup>4</sup> 11:6–9; 65:25; 43:20