

QUESTIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP STUDY IN THE BOOK OF ISAIAH CHAPTERS TWELVE TO TWENTYSIX

Our problem throughout history has always been the same, rebellion against our Father in heaven, the God who made us. The solution has always been the same, cleansing, redemption, reconciliation and a new life once we repent and submit again to Him. But the question is 'how does God do this?'

The book of Isaiah more clearly than any other Old Testament book presents us with the answer - through Jesus Christ. According to chapter two He will be our Teacher(2:3) but if we do not listen then eventually our Judge when He returns.(2:4) We have been too proud to listen, preferring our self-made 'gods'.(2:5-22) He would have been our Healer and Ruler if we had not been too stubborn.(3:7) Instead of accepting wise, experienced leadership we will look to the young and the outwardly attractive to direct our chaotic society.(3:4,12,16-26) The result will be that the most needy will suffer.(3:14,15)

Those who want eternal life will turn to Christ as the Branch of the Lord.(4:2; 11:1) The same picture is used by Jeremiah,(23:5; 33:15) and Zechariah,(3:8;6:12) The name of Nazareth, where Jesus grew up, is from the Hebrew word, 'netser', a branch. It would one day be on a tree that God would cleanse our sin.(I Pet.2:24) The picture of the Branch is developed further in the next chapter where Jesus is foreshadowed as the Vine of whom we are to be the branches. We must abide in Him to become fruitful with His character.(5:1-7; Jn.15:1-11) If we choose to ignore Him and go our own way, the consequences will be terrible. God cannot tolerate rebellion for ever.

Isaiah's vision of the Lord as the King enthroned in the temple brings God's holiness and his own unworthiness home to him.(6:1-5) Nevertheless he was made clean first and then given a job to do telling stubborn people the truth.(6:6-13) The Lord sent Isaiah to an unbelieving king, Ahaz, in threatening times to encourage him to look to God for victory, but he refused to do so. Isaiah told him of the future amazing miracle of Jesus' virgin birth as Immanuel, 'God with us', but he was unimpressed.(7:14) He preferred defeat and poverty.

In the next chapter the Lord is the Rock on whom we can either build our lives, or if we refuse Him, be crushed by.(8:14,15) Paul,(Rom.9:33) and Peter,(I Pet.2:4-8) develop the same picture in the New Testament. Isaiah's marriage and subsequent son illustrate his message.(8:1-4) Chapter 9 returns to the theme of the future baby, descended from David, who will become the King.(9:6,7) He will be God's means of bringing light to His people and of rebuilding them as His nation if they will listen.(9:1-5) Refusing to do so will provoke His anger. Still God's people will have two choices. If they persist in injustice to the poor they will meet the Judge,(10:1-4) but if they rely on Him, He will be their Restorer,(10:20-27) who will exchange the yoke of slavery for one of service,(Matt.11:28-30) and bring them back to what He planned. The image of the Branch is extended to remind us that the One who will come will be descended from David and empowered by the Holy Spirit.(11:1-5) His coming will bring peace to His creation and His people. It will be a new world.(11:6-16)

12 Q.1. Chapter 1 left us with the question 'how could our sin be washed away and our lives restored?' Chapters 2-11 presented the answer - through Jesus Christ. Chap.12 offers us a simple prayer of response to the good news. What is that response to be? And what will be the result of responding in this way?
home to him

Q.2. Chapters 13-24 consist of oracles - messages from God - to various surrounding nations all of whom repeatedly played roles in Israel's history. Each nation seems to have had the same kind of effect on Israel every time they came into the story. List the nations named and look them up on a map to see where they are in relation to Israel. Look them up in the Old Testament to see in each case what problems they caused and what lessons were learned.

13, 14 Q.3. Babylon is the same place as Babel. What is the importance of Babel in the Old Testament?(Gen.11:1-9) The people who lived there are often also called Chaldeans. For what were the Chaldeans famous?(Dan 2:10) In the 6th century B.C. they captured Jerusalem and took the people of Judah captive to Babylon for 70 years. The Jews' final deliverance in the Old Testament is from slavery in Babylon. Who had captured and enslaved us until we were saved? Look up the references to 'Babylon' in Revelation 17 and I Peter 5:13? To whom do they really refer?

14:28-32 Q.4. Which famous enemy of Israel came from Philistia?(I Sam.17:4) What does the serpent picture throughout the Bible?(Gen.3:1; Rev.12:9) How is Philistia to be dealt with? How would this help God's people then and now?

15, 16 Q.5. How did the people of Moab lead the Israelites away from God in Num.25? For what was Eglon, King of Moab, famous?(Judg.3:17) How are we also defeated by 'Moab' today? How do Isaiah 15 &16 demonstrate God's solution to the problem of Moab then and now?

17 Q.6. Damascus was the capital of Syria, Israel's latest enemy and their immediate problem.(Isa.7) What was God going to do about Syria? What lesson would Israel have to learn as God dealt with their current problem? What stops us trusting God with our immediate problems?

18 Q.7. Cush (Ethopia) seemed a long way away, yet they too could become a threat when least expected. How does God teach us important lessons concerning issues we never thought we would have to face?

19 Q.8. Israel had once been slaves in Egypt, until God redeemed them. At times of crisis Old Testament characters had turned to Egypt for help. Which ones?(Gen.12:10; 42:1; Jer.42) What problem could Egypt represent for us? How does this chapter teach us God will handle this problem in our lives?

20 Q.9. Every now and then through this book Isaiah is told to urge people to apply this message to contemporary events. How does he do so on this occasion? How could we apply the action in this chapter today?

21-24 Q.10. Several further areas are used to illustrate other problems in our Christian lives. What places are used to make what points to us ?

25, 26 Q.11. This section concludes with an outline of how we can apply the lessons of chapters 13-24 in our lives and so experience God's salvation daily. What are the steps Isaiah describes?