

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Over 60 years ago, Bing Crosby won an Oscar for a movie in which he starred with Barry Fitzgerald. The movie was *Going My Way*, and the hit song from the movie was *Swinging On a Star*. It goes like this: "Would you like to swing on a star, carry moon beams home in a jar, and be better off than you are, or would you rather be a mule? A mule is an animal with long funny ears, he kicks up at anything he hears, His back is brawny, but his brain is weak, he's just plain stupid with a stubborn streak--And, by the way, if you hate to go to school, you may grow up to be a mule! Or, would you like to swing on a star, carry moon beams home in a jar, and be better off than you are, or would you rather be a pig?" The song goes on to say, "a pig is an animal with dirt on his face, his shoes are a terrible disgrace; he has no manners when he eats his food, he's fat and lazy and extremely rude; and if you don't care a feather or a fig, you may grow up to be a pig."

Isaiah sang a song much like this to Israel and Judah (Isa. 1:2-3). So did his contemporaries (Hosea 4:16; 8:9; Amos 4:1). But it never made the Top Ten. Isaiah's message is just as relevant today as it was 2600 years ago; man in rebellion against God becomes worse than an animal. When man exchanges the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man or birds or animals or reptiles he becomes a fool (Rom. 1:22-25). A dog will wag his tail and a cat will purr when you feed them; man in sin, though he knows there is a God, does not honor him or give thanks to him (Rom. 1:21). Isaiah told his people they could be "better than they were" if they would walk in the way of the Lord. Unless men surrender to the arbitrary decisions and pronouncements of God's word (Isa. 2:4) they will grow up to be rebellious mules and disgraceful pigs! And, by the way, if you hate to go to Bible School, you will grow up to be a mule.

QUESTIONS:

1. Is Isaiah advocating abandonment of the law of Moses? 1:11-14 (see Matt. 12:7; 15:1-20).
2. Does God's invitation to come reason together mean human beings can work out a compromise with God? 1:18. What does it mean?
3. What are the latter days of Isa. 2:2? What is Zion? 2:3
4. When is the beating of swords into plowshares to take place? 2:4
5. When did God humble the haughtiness of man? 2:11,17). Why?
6. What happens to God's covenant people when boys become princes? 3:1-15
7. What are the consequences when God's women prostitute their femininity? 3:16--4:1
8. When did God's spirit of judgment and spirit of burning cleanse his people? 4:4; see also Malachi 3:1-4.

**There is no more terrible sight than
ignorance in action. ---Goethe**

Ignorance, when voluntary, is criminal.
---Samuel Johnson

"But these (false teachers), like irrational **animals**, creatures of instinct, born to be caught and killed, reviling in matters of which they are **ignorant**, will be destroyed in the same destruction with them, suffering wrong for their wrongdoing." 2 Peter 2:12-14

*Man, attempting to make himself higher than God,
makes himself lower than animals. --Carl Ketcherside*

LESSON TEXT: Isaiah 5:1---6:13

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Jerome Hines, famous opera star, went to a restaurant in Chicago called *The Italian Village*, haunt of show people after a performance. A part of a dozen or more people were eating at Mr. Hine's table when he arrived with other guests. Mr. Hines and his guests were seated and engrossed in conversation when their food finally arrived. "We are going to thank the Lord for this food. We will appreciate it if you will be quiet while we pray," Hines announced. Then, in a voice that could be heard practically all over the restaurant, above the clink of glasses and the murmur of voices, Hines prayed. When he finished, the conversation at his table turned to spiritual subjects and Jerome Hines recounted his Christian faith and testimony.

This graphically illustrates the situation into which Isaiah the prophet was thrust. He found himself in the midst of a nation engrossed in indulging itself greedily and shamelessly, never pausing to acknowledge God, the Source of its abundance. It was a nation consumed with taking but never giving. And because of ingratitude it was turning its abundance into rottenness. It was not only useless, it was a blight on creation! This vineyard of the Lord would have to be drastically pruned (chastened), lest it contaminate everything around it.

Isaiah was God's man for the hour--not because of his skills, not because of his position, but because of his humble gratitude. As Christians we face a world lost in greed and ungratefulness. God is able to use us to turn the world toward him not on the basis of our fame or power or expertise, but because we are thankful. God knows our witness-quotient will be equal to our gratitude-quotient. **Thankfulness** is not something with which we are born--it is something we learn when we discover and acknowledge the grace of God. Be in Bible School this Sunday and learn of the grace of God!

QUESTIONS:

1. Do you think of Isa. 5:1-10 as a love song? It is much like one of our plaintive country songs. It communicates! What is its main lesson?
2. What is the worst consequence of carousing? 5:11-5:22-23
3. Would people ever *reverse* right and wrong? 5:20. Is it done today?
4. Why would the Lord get *angry* at the rejection of his law? 5:24-25
5. How did the Lord *signal* for a nation to come, punish Israel? 5:26-30
6. Why give Isaiah a vision of God in the year king Uzziah died? 6:1
7. What was Isaiah's reaction when he saw the glory of God? 6:5
8. What motivated Isaiah to volunteer to go for the Lord? 6:7-8
9. What would be the result of Isaiah's preaching? 6:10,13
10. How long was Isaiah to preach? 6:11-12. Does this alarm you that you might have the same results for your evangelistic labors?
11.

The evangelistic harvest is always urgent. The destiny of men and of nations is always being decided. Every generation is strategic. We are not responsible for the past generation, and we cannot bear the full responsibility for the next one; but we do have our generation. God will hold us responsible as to how well we fulfill our responsibilities to this age and take advantage of our opportunities.
--Billy Graham

**Let never day nor night unhallowed pass,
But still remember what the Lord hath done.**
--King Henry in Shakespear's, *King Henry VI*

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Joan Baez sings, "You are the orphans in an age of no tomorrow's." Arthur Koestler writes, "Nature has let us down, God seem to have left the receiver off the hook and time is running out." Os Guinness, in his book, *The Dust of Death*, quotes a number of statements of terrified unbelievers about the future of mankind. Ralph Lapp warns, "No one--not even the most brilliant scientist alive today really knows where science is taking us. We are aboard a train which is gathering speed, racing down a track on which there are an unknown number of switches leading to unknown destinations. No single scientist is in the engine cab, and there may be demons at the switch. Most of society is in the caboose looking backward."

There is a frightful pessimism today that is causing vast segments of human society to cast all moral restraint aside. Millions of people have interest only in indulging the fleshly appetites. Every value system and every institution of a generation ago is scoffed at in most places now. All because the devil has deceived the world into believing that God has left the receiver off the hook. The idolatries of scientism and humanism have replaced the worship of *The God Who Is There* (Francis Schaeffer).

In the same kind of national despondency Isaiah was called by God to preach. Good king Uzziah was dead. The wicked king Ahaz was on the throne. He seemed powerless to stand before the threats of annihilation for his nation. He was casting aside all moral values; he was practicing idolatry he was leading the kingdom of God into destruction. Isaiah confronted Ahaz with the message of Immanuel (i.e., God is with us.). The prophet promised a sign to Ahaz of God's guiding, caring, saving presence with men. That sign was to have its fulfillment 700 years later in the birth of a Child, conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of a virgin. That Child would be Immanuel. God has always been with man--on man's side. And to prove it beyond any reasonable doubt, God came in human flesh as Jesus Christ of Nazareth. Now his Holy Spirit has come to abide with believers forever. God has not left the phone off the hook--God is not dead. GOD IS WITH US!

QUESTIONS:

1. Do you think it took courage for Isaiah to confront king Ahaz with God's message? 7:1-9. Could you confront an unbelieving ruler today with God's message?
2. How could the virgin birth be a sign to king Ahaz? 7:14-17 Why does most of the world refuse to accept Jesus as God with us?
3. To what extent did God direct Assyria upon Judah 7:18-25 (see Isa. 10:5-34). Does God still function in the world like that? (See Revelation).
4. How did the names of Isaiah's sons become a message to the nation? 8:1-15
5. Who are the disciples and what is the teaching Isaiah is to seal? 8:16-22
6. Where is the prophecy of Isa. 9:1-2 fulfilled? Is the rest of that context fulfilled there also?
7. Who is the child of Isa. 9:6? How do you know?

In 1864 during a crisis at the Telegu Mission in India, John E. Clough offered to go to the field. But what did the Missionary Union want a civil engineer for in South India? Despite mission board misgivings, his zeal paid off and he was on his way. Thirteen years later, it became apparent why God had called this non-seminary trained man to India. During the great famine of 1876-77, it was his civil engineering degree that won him the appointment to supervise the digging of the unfinished Buckingham Canal, enabling him to hire thousands of starving natives, and so securing them wages and means to buy food. And because of such sympathetic contacts with the Telegus, Clough was able to give them the Scriptures and preach to them about Christ as God with us.

People refuse to acknowledge Jesus Christ is "God with us" because they don't want him interfering with their pride and selfishness.--PTB

LESSON TEXT: Isaiah 10:1---12:6

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Prince Otto von Bismarck, the Iron Chancellor, said: "The great problems of mankind must be solved by blood and iron (i.e., war), not by speeches and resolutions." He led Germany into 3 successive wars and became the role-model for Wilhelm Kaiser II (World War I) and Adolph Hitler (WW II). Ever since the Garden of Eden, Satan has duped some men into believing they may be as gods (Gen. 3:5) and usurp the Lord's sovereignty over this world.

God created man to be free in his truth (Jn. 8:31-32). The devil's lie is that man can be free only when he rules himself and the world in which he lives. Certain men, with the vain trappings of worldly power, have fancied themselves as the gods who could make that illusion a reality. The irony of it is human rulers have had to resort to war to produce their false peace and to enslavement to produce their false freedom. When ruthless human demagogues set out to rule the world, evil and cruelty engulfs the human race. The forces of evil and wickedness appear to be enthroned over all the creation. The beastliness of sinful rule seems to be invincible (Rev. 13:4). But God is always on his throne. He is always sovereign. He will never let evil have control. God never controls man's choice, but he always controls circumstances and the results of men's choices to make them serve his redemptive purposes.

God was in control over 2700 years ago when the Assyrian emperor declared himself to be more powerful than any god--including Jehovah. God used this ruthless and wicked warmonger to correct and perfect a remnant of believers through whom he could work his redemption for the world. At the same time, Jehovah was promising and producing a kingdom of righteousness, justice and peace to the world through the shoot from the stump of Jesse.

This lesson is for you and me. God does not change! It may appear to some today that the forces of evil and wickedness are invincibly enthroned over most of the world--but God is on the throne of the whole creation!

QUESTIONS:

1. What is the storm coming upon Judah? 10:3
2. Does God actually use heathen powers to chasten his covenant people? 10:5-11 (see Isa. 44:28; 45:1ff; Jer. 27:1-15, etc.).
3. Does God hold pagan rulers responsible to standards of conduct? 10:12-19. What standards? (See Amos 1:1---2:16; Dan. 5:17-28)
4. What was the period of God's indignation? 10:25
5. Who is the shoot from the stump of Jesse? 11:1,10
6. When are the circumstances of 11:6-9 to be realized?
7. Where is the highway of 11:16? (See Isa. 19:26-25; 35:8-10).
8. When was the day water was drawn from the wells of salvation? 12:3 (see Jn. 4:10; 7:37-38).

A human mechanic may leave the machine he has constructed to work without his further personal superintendence, because, when he leaves it, God's laws take it up; and by their aid, the of which the machine is made retain their materials solidity--the steel continues to, be elastic the vapor keeps its expansive power.

But when God constructed his machine of the universe, he could not leave it, or any minutest part of it, in its immensity and intricacy of movement, to itself; for, if he retires, there is no second God to take care of this machine. Not from a single atom of matter can he for a moment withdraw his superintendence and support.

Each successive moment all over the world, the act of creation must be repeated. The existence of the world witnesses to a perpetuity of creating influence. Active omnipotence must flood the universe, or its machinery stops and its very existence terminates. The signs of an all-pervading supernatural energy meet us wherever we turn. Every leaf waves in it, every plant in all its organic processes lives in it; it rolls round the clouds, else they would not move; it fires the sunbeam, else it would not shine; and there is not a wave that restlessly rises and sinks, nor a whisper of the wanton wind that bloweth where it listeth but bespeaks the immediate intervention of God .---Caird

I am the Lord and there is no other.

Jehovah God, Isa. 45:5,6,18

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Imagine you are living 2800 years ago; you are a Jewish citizen of Jerusalem. Sitting down to your breakfast of *mattza*-toast, *citron* juice, and *kosher* eggs (no ham) you are reading in the Jerusalem Post the following headlines: "Civil Authorities Implicated in Extortion Ring! Alcoholism Major Problem Among Government Leaders! Assyria Conquers Ten Northern Tribes--Threatens Invasion of Judah! Nation's Leaders Admit Military Defenses Inadequate--Fear Defeat! Religious Leader, Isaiah Counsels Faith--Predicts Deliverance! Isaiah Says Real Threat National Depravity and Babylon--Predicts Captivity in 200 Years!" What would you think? How would you react? Many of your neighbors would be saying, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." Frivolous cynicism would be the fashion. There would be one lonely voice crying, "The Lord has founded Zion, and in her the afflicted of his people find refuge." But he is a preacher and preachers don't know anything about politics and world affairs. Would you go with the crowds or listen to the preacher?

Things haven't changed much, have they? Crime, corruption, chaos and cringing fear are everywhere. God's 21st century covenant people are surrounded by cynicism and despair. The news is all bad. George Wald of Harvard said, "What we are up against is a generation that is by no means sure it has a future." Desmond King-Hele, in his book, *The End of The Twentieth Century*, suggested that Christians should erect only disposable churches which can be dismantled as soon as the supernatural beliefs die out! What do you think when you hear the evening news or read it in your newspaper? Does all this make you feel like caving in to cynicism?--to looking at life with despair?

Friend, the God who delivered his church from Assyria and redeemed it from Babylon is still on his throne! His truth is still marching on. He is still tramping out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored. His sovereignty continues to rule in the affairs of nations and men. The message of Isaiah is as relevant today as it was 2800 years ago. Isaiah's message is repeated and confirmed in the New Testament--God's covenant will be kept--God's church will be victorious.

QUESTIONS:

1. Who were the consecrated ones of God to be sent against Babylon? 13:1-4 (see 13:17).
2. Why would God describe the fall of Babylon in terms of cosmic catastrophe? 13:10,13 (cf. Matt. 24:29; Heb. 12:25-29).
3. Who was Day Star? 14:12--see 14:4 when did he exalt himself above God (see Daniel, chapter 4).
4. Will God ever let evil-doers possess the whole earth? 14:20-27
5. Was it Isaiah's heart, or God's, crying out for Moab? 15:5. Why?
6. Why did Isaiah tell the Jews to let the outcasts of Moab sojourn among them? 16:1-5. When was the throne of David to come? 16:5
7. In what way would men regard their Maker? 17:7ff
8. What is the portion of those who despoil God's covenant people? 17:14

According to an old legend, the devil once advertised his tools for sale at public auction. When the prospective buyers assembled, there was one oddly shaped tool which was labeled "Not for sale."

Asked to explain why this was, the devil answered, "I can spare my other tools, but I cannot spare this one. It is the most useful implement that I have. It is called Discouragement, and with it I can work my way into hearts otherwise inaccessible. When I get this tool into a man's heart, the way is open to plant anything there I may desire."

LESSON TEXT: Isaiah 18:1---20:6

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

The beautiful Cleopatra was the last of the great Ptolemies to rule Egypt. Rather than fall into the hands of the invading Romans, she is said to have allowed a poisonous snake to bite her. So, when they came to her palace they found her in all her regal splendor--dead. In Tennyson's words, Cleopatra says: "I died a Queen. The Roman soldier found Me lying dead, my crown about my brow, A name forever!" Egypt today has a name. But that is about all she has. Thousands of years ago she was the greatest nation on the face of the earth--rich, powerful, education and cultured. Recent archaeological discoveries indicate Egyptian scientists and engineers had expertise in chemistry and construction that modern civilization has never recaptured. Ancient Egyptian physicians performed surgery on the human eye, brain and internally in the abdominal area (see Jer. 46:11).

The Egypt we know today is not like that at all! It was in Isaiah's own time that Egypt began to decline. She was subjugated successively by the Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks and Romans. After the Romans came the Mohammedan conquest and subsequent political and economic destitution. Sixty-three per-cent of Egypt's population is packed into the Nile delta area--the remainder clings closely along the Nile valley, utterly dependent upon the Nile for survival. Having hardly no industry at all, she is almost totally an agricultural nation without enough capital to import manufactured goods necessary for national growth. God said of Egypt, through Ezekiel, "It shall be the most lowly of the kingdoms, and never again exalt itself above the nations" (Ezek. 29:25). Although Egypt today is predominantly Islamic in religious affiliation, Jews after Isaiah's day and first-century Christianity played a significant role in Egypt's history. Did you know the Jews built a Hebrew temple in Egypt and offered sacrifices there to Jehovah? Did you know Egypt was the focal point of some of the earliest missionary endeavors of the first-century church? Did you know Isaiah predicted all this 600 years before it happened? There is a lesson in all this for you! BE IN BIBLE SCHOOL!

QUESTIONS: (Study for this lesson also: Jer. 46:1-28; Ezek. 29:1C32:32)

1. When did the Ethiopians bring gifts to Zion? 18:1-7
2. Name three forms of God's judgment to fall upon Egypt 19:1-15
3. What day is Isaiah predicting in 19:16,18,19,23,24?
4. When would Egyptian cities be speaking the language of Canaan? 19:18
5. What is the highway joining Egypt and Assyria? 19:23
6. How could Israelites, Egyptians and Assyrians ever be untied and become a blessing in the midst of the earth? 19:24-25
7. Who is king Sargon? When did he do what Isaiah predicted? 20:1-4
8. Who was to learn what from Egypt's fall? 20:45-6. Is there a lesson for 21st century believers there? What?

At the turn of the 20th century, a fascinating discovery was made on the island of Elephantine, located at the first cataract in the Nile, some 583 miles south of Cairo. As early as 1895, evidence of papyrus documents had been found on the island by native diggers, and in 1904, the Service of Antiquities in Egypt made excavations which uncovered many papyri, including documents written by a colony of Jews in the Aramaic language in the period 500-400 B.C. One of the documents was a letter written to the Persian governor of Jerusalem in the year 407 or 408 B.C., asking for permission to rebuild the temple on the island of Elephantine. Whether these were actually some of the descendants of the Jews who came down with Johanan and Jeremiah we cannot say, but at least they may well have been some of the same. Albright believes that the Elephantine documents were written by Jews probably connected with the migration to Egypt described in Jeremiah chs. 41-44, not long after 587 B.C.
Archaeology and Bible History, by Joseph P. Free, p. 231

"Why has Apis fled? Why did not your bull stand? Because the Lord thrust him down." ---Jeremiah 45:15

LESSON TEXT: Isaiah 21:1---23:18

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Isaiah warned the chosen people their infatuation with paganism would result in severe judgments from God. Proud and impudent, they insisted they must adopt heathen ways to succeed and be accepted by those around them. They began practicing heathen religion, humanistic politics and hedonistic life-styles. But the pagan empires and institutions they idolized crumbled and fell or were violently swept away. Some of the so-called friendly pagan powers they trusted turned on them, invaded their land, devastated their homes and enslaved or killed their people.

The Jews tried to hide their despair with false frivolity and impulsive indulgence (Isa. chs. 21-23). They built up their defenses and armed themselves with weapons--all to no avail. Hopelessly they resigned themselves to a fashionable philosophy of pagan fatalism--"Let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die." They lost contact with a living, immanent God, eager and able to deliver them. They even worshiped Fortune and Destiny (Isa. 65:11). The Christians in Corinth, 800 years later, because they were listening to teachers denying Christ's resurrection, came close to the same pessimistic fatalism. Five of the seven churches of Asia Minor (Rev. 2-3) were solemnly warned against adopting worldly ideas and practices born of a fondness or fear of the beastliness of paganism. Christ makes it clear that the beast (Roman empire) was not invincible--it was human and would be defeated. Christians do not have to get help from paganism or fear it for any reason. Christ warned that he would destroy the life and function of any congregation compromising with heathenism.

Human life is not controlled by a capricious Fortune. We do not have to resign ourselves to Fate and an indulgent, Let us eat and drink philosophy. Schopenhauer said, "What men commonly call their fate is mostly only their own foolishness." Without God man loses contact with all that is valuable in human life--love, honor, justice, peace and dignity. When men lose contact with the **word of God**, they lose contact with God. Be sure to be in Bible School--keep contact with God through his **word**.

QUESTIONS:

1. Why was Isaiah grieved at his vision of Babylon's fall? 21:1-5
2. Why tell Isaiah to set a watchman to witness this? 21:6-10
3. What is the watchman's answer about the night? 21:11-12
4. What were the people of the Valley of Vison doing on the housetops? 22:1-4 and why?
5. What does the Lord think about the attitude: Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die? 22:12-14 (see 1 Cor. 15:12-34)
6. Why did the Lord choose Eliakim over Shebna? 22:15-25
7. Why was Tyre so important that Isaiah (and God) would devote a whole chapter to pronouncing its fall? 23:1-18 (see also Ezek. ch. 26-28; Jer. 27:1-11; Zech. ch. 9).

The traveler to Pompeii is shown the temple of Isis, the statue of the idol through whose open lips the credulous worshipers of long ago fancied they obtained trustworthy answers to their petitions. But alongside the ruined shrine he also sees the secret staircase by which the fraudulent priest reached the back of the statue and the concealed pipe through which the priest murmured the thought-to-be responses of the oracle. This is exactly what John writes in symbolic language in the book of Revelation (Rev. 13:13-18). The image of the beast could **not** talk--it was **not** divine--it was human hocus pocus! Christians have been told by the apostle Paul that an idol has no real existence and there is no God but one. (1 Cor. 8:4-6).

**The words that I have spoken unto you
are spirit and life. ---Jesus**

LESSON TEXT: Isaiah 24:1---27:13

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

The *Joplin Globe* for Sunday, June 28, 1981 and Monday, June 29, 1981, ran two feature articles about a religious sect in Tucson, AZ, which had predicted the rapture for June 28, 1981. Obviously, their predictions were wrong--or some of us missed it! We do not believe it is possible to find either the date or the description of this so-called rapture. Many have tried; each fiasco brings discredit and ridicule to Biblical Christianity. The New Testament plainly declares no one will know the time of the final judgment.

We **do** believe in the **certainty** of a final judgment. John Bunyan, author of *Pilgrim's Progress* said, "When wicked persons have gone on in a course of sin, and find they have reason to fear the just judgment of God for their sins, they begin at first to wish that there were no God to punish them; then by degrees they persuade themselves that there is none; and then they set themselves to study for arguments to back their opinion." There are too many declarations in God's word and too many proofs in history for a final judgment to argue against it. There are proofs in history, in science and in the Bible. That is what our lesson is about in these 3 chapters of Isaiah.

Judgment is not the end of the story. Isaiah, ch. 24, predicts God's defeat of all that is against him and a glorious victory when he shall reign in Zion. Isaiah ch. 25 predicts a time of great celebration for God's people when he is victorious. God will himself supply the feast; it will be for people of all nations. Isaiah ch. 26, predicts that God's victory will bring peace and justification for those who are faithful to him. Did you know that what Isaiah predicted has essentially been accomplished in Christ's **first** coming? Yes, Jesus said, "For judgment came I into the world...Now is the judgment of this world.." etc. (Jn. 9:39; 12:31). Yes, because of Jesus we are now celebrating a feast (1 Cor. 5:8)...for the kingdom of heaven is like a feast (Matt. 22:1ff; Lk. Chs. 14-15). And Christians now have perfect peace and justification. What we have **now** awaits only its consummation. Be in Bible School and learn how Isaiah's predictions are available **now!**

QUESTIONS:

1. Upon whom will God's predicted judgment fall? 24:1-3
2. Why was judgment to come? 24:5
3. What will be the conclusion of this judgment to come? 24:23
4. What response did God expect as a result of this judgment? 25:1-5
5. When was the predicted feast to occur? 25:6-9
6. What is perfect peace? 26:3-4
7. What is the expected result of God's judgments in the earth? 26:9-10
8. What resurrection is predicted in Isaiah 26:19? (See also Hosea 6:1-3; Ezek. 37:1ff; Dan. 12:1ff).
9. Is the veil from off your eyes? Is your relationship to God one of celebration? Has he swallowed up death for you? Do you have perfect peace?

Herbert had it backward when he wrote, "Where there is peace, God is." It is just the opposite. Where God is, there is peace. That's why Paul speaks of the God of peace (Phil. 4:9; Rom. 16:20; 1 Thess. 5:23; 2 Thess. 3:16) and of the peace of God (Col. 3:15; Phil. 4:7).

"We have come from somewhere and are going somewhere. The great Architect of the universe never built a stairway that leads to nowhere."
---Robert Millikan,

LESSON TEXT: Isaiah 28:1---30:33

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Someone said: "You are only young once---but you can stay immature indefinitely." Spiritual immaturity has afflicted the kingdom of God from OT times until the present. It infects the 21st century church like a plague! These chapters in Isaiah (28-30) describe the infantile attitudes of Israel toward spiritual growth. Their refusal to be taught precept upon precept, line upon line, their dilatoriness in reading the word of God, and their demand to have illusions preached. They were precocious brats who would not sit still to be taught by the slow, repetitious line-by-line method of the prophet. They demanded excitement (riding upon horses 30:15), thrills, and fantasies.

Jesus found the religious leaders of his time to be moral midgets. They knew their traditions, but not the Scriptures; they clamored for miracles of bread and fish, but refused to listen to his **words** (Jn. 6:63). Stunted spirituality was an epidemic in the 1st century churches. The classic case is Corinth. There, like those of Isaiah's day, they despised the true way to spirituality (prophetic preaching) and, like brats (1 Cor. 14:20) scrambled for the excitement of showy gifts. Paul even quotes Isa. 28:9-13 to impress upon them their childishness (1 Cor. 14:21)---see also the churches of Asia Minor (Rev. 2-3).

The president of Bryan College, Spring 1974, reports on a test of factual knowledge of the Bible given to 1300 adults (Sunday School members) at various churches across the U.S. The test was not developed by Christians and was analyzed by an electronic computer. Results: (a) correlation between scores on Bible **knowledge** and **attitude** toward self and others was significant and positive showing that the amount of factual Bible knowledge possessed is directly related to positive concepts of self and others; (b) generally speaking, the person who has more factual **Bible knowledge** has a greater desire to **grow** as a Christian; (c) the progressive philosophy of education has done us a disservice by minimizing the **importance of facts**; (d) implications are inescapable---the program of Christian education that fails at the point of communicating basic **Biblical facts** fails at the very beginning of the teaching-learning process.

QUESTIONS:

1. Why and how did the Lord speak to Israel by men of an alien tongue? 28:1-13
2. What is the precious stone laid in Zion? 28:16-17. How did it get laid there in Isaiah's day?
3. Was the Lord responsible for closing Israel's eyes? 29:9-14
4. When will the deaf hear and the blind see? 29:17-24
5. Why would Israel opt for illusions rather than the preaching of God's word? 30:9-11. Could that be possible after the Gospel came?
6. How is Israel to be saved? 30:15-18
7. Who is the *Teacher* whom they shall see? 30:19-26

Receive my instruction, and not silver; and knowledge rather than choice gold. For wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it.
Proverbs 8;10-11

And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth, for my hope is in thy ordinances. I will keep thy law continually, for ever and ever; and I shall walk at liberty, for I have sought thy precepts. I will also speak of thy testimonies before kings, and shall not be put to shame for I find my delight in thy commandments, which I love. I revere thy commandments, which I love, and I will meditate on thy statutes.
Psalms 119:43-48

Ignorance is not bliss, it is blight. ---ptb See Hosea 4:6

LESSON TEXT: Isaiah 31:1---35:10

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Have you had enough of the glorification of anti-heros and villains? Does most of the fare on TV and movies depress you with the feeling that perhaps history is out of control and that great, evil, has taken over the world? Would you like to read, for a change, about that great, good just, pure and honorable Hero-King who has ridden into the milieu of history and forever defeated villainy? Would it warm your heart to know an Eternal, Righteous, and Gracious King lives, has conquered the Villain, slain the Dragon and set up his Kingdom of Peace? Would you be thrilled to know that the end of the story is-- **He** wants **you** to be a citizen of his Camelot?

Isaiah chapters 31-35 are from the Book by the Author of History and Life. These chapters predict a King who would defeat the great Villain opposing mankind, set up his rule of goodness and justice, and provide an eternal kingdom of security and productivity. Isn't that a thrilling story? Doesn't it sound exciting? But--is it true? Are there any catches to it? Or is it all a "tale told by idiots, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing"?

Yes! It is true! Yes! It is exciting! No! There aren't any catches to it! It is a kingdom greater than Oz. It is a citizenship granting more freedom than the 'land of the free and home of the brave.' It is richer than Babylon, more powerful than Rome, and wiser than all the philosophers of ancient Greece. Like any community or kingdom, enjoyment of privileges necessitates responsibilities of citizenship. In the Kingdom of the Messiah (Christ) it all focuses on surrender to the King's authority---the will and word of righteousness and grace.

Shockingly, most of the world today chooses to remain in bondage to the great Villain-Dragon. Don't let that happen to you! Be in Bible School and learn the whole story. Take up citizenship in Christ's Kingdom!

Goodness is something so simple: Always live for others, never seek one's own advantage. ---Dag Hammarskjold.
It's the essence of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ ---ptb

QUESTIONS:

1. Does the warning against seeking Egyptian help prohibit nations from making alliances with one another against international aggression? 31:1ff
2. Who is the king to reign in righteousness? 32:1
3. How would his reign cause the mind of the rash to have good judgment? 32:4
4. When would the Spirit be poured out from on high? 32:15
5. Is Isaiah describing the character of the citizen of Zion? 33:15-16
6. Who is the king of 33:17--and when would he be seen?
7. What do you think about the blood-thirsty Lord of 34:5-7? Is that your God?
8. Does the prediction of 35:1-7 apply to the geographical land of Palestine? If so, when? If not, to what? Compare 35:3-4 with Heb. 12:1-28 for answers!
9. What is the highway of 35:8-10? (See Way in Jn. 10:1; 14:4-6; Matt. 7:13-14; Acts 24:14; Heb. 9:8; 10:20; 2 Pet. 2:2,15,21; etc.).

LESSON TEXT: Isaiah 36:1---39:8

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Are there times when you feel surrounded, outnumbered, so weak you just feel like caving in? Have you ever said about temptations or assaults upon your faith—"If you can't whip 'em, you might as well join 'em"? Have you ever been threatened, lured or dared to give in to the enemy of your God and your faith?

Don't feel like the Lone Ranger! Countless believers, great and small, have suffered the same feelings of hopelessness. Hezekiah was just such a person. He was king of Judah when Assyria with its massive army overran Palestine and surrounded Jerusalem. You will notice, as you study these chapters, the assault the world makes upon the believer's relationship to God does not change from century to century! Rabshakeh belittled Hezekiah by not even calling him king 36:4; he taunted the Jews, calling them cowards 36:8-9; he used reverse psychology and promised them good things if they would surrender 36:16-17; he suggested their leader might be deceiving them 36:28; he pointed to Assyria's victories as a threat 36:19-20. Does all that sound familiar? The Rabshakeh even suggested that the Lord was on his side, directing him in assaulting God's city 36:10! That is the way evil is--that is the way the devil works!

Hezekiah was a man of courage. Ben Gurion, former Israeli prime minister once said: "Courage is a special kind of knowledge; the knowledge of how to fear what ought to be feared and how not to fear what ought not to be feared." Courage of that kind takes faith in God. Faith demands action. Hezekiah had faith and he took action. He saved Jerusalem. What Hezekiah did is exactly what we must do when we are surrounded and outnumbered by enemies to our faith. And it is no exaggeration to say the survival of new Jerusalem (the church), depends on our actions as we are surrounded by the world today. Don't miss Bible School this Lord's Day. Hezekiah proves that human beings who believe in God can act with faith and courage, and find victory in life, NOW!

"You cannot run away from a weakness; you must some time fight it out or perish; and if that be so, why not now, and where you stand?"--Robert Louis Stevenson

QUESTIONS:

1. How could the Rabshakeh know what the Hebrew leaders had been saying about rescue by the aid of the Egyptians? 36:4-6
2. What is the Rabshakeh's estimate of Hezekiah's religious reform? 36:7
3. Does the Rabshakeh's verbal assault remind you of the way the world tempts Christians today?
4. Why ask the Rabshakeh to speak in Aramaic? 36:11-12
5. Name two specific things Hezekiah did when he found his city in trouble? 37:2,14
6. Can you comprehend 185,000 dead soldiers in one night? Is it impossible? 37:36-38
7. Why did God add 15 years to Hezekiah's life? 38:6
8. Are you able, like Hezekiah to say, "it was for my welfare that I had great bitterness"? 38:17 (see Psa. 119:49-96; Heb. 10:32-39; 12:1-17).
9. Why punish Hezekiah's descendants for Hezekiah's sin? 39:5-8

"I'm tired of hearing about public men with 'the courage of their convictions'; Nero and Caligula and Atilla and Hitler had the courage of their convictions--but not one had the courage to examine his convictions, or to change them, which is the true test of character."

--Sydney Harris

"Success is never final, and failure never fatal; it's courage that counts."

--Grit

LESSON TEXT: Isaiah 40:1--43:28
Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

An old Japanese proverb says, "When you're dying of thirst it's too late to think about digging a well!" Ah, so! I believe our God knew that proverb long before the Japanese knew it. God is the Perfect Planner. He planned his redemptive program for mankind over long eons of time and with minute detail. God started digging the well of Living Water thousands of years ahead of time because he knew man would be dying of spiritual thirst.

In our lesson for the coming Lord's Day God talks about man's salvation--planning to send a "Voice" to announce the coming of his "Servant-Messiah." God describes his manner of coming; God shows that those who want the benefits of the Servant's divine planning will need faith; God unfolds how his plan includes the whole world; he reveals that Jesus was exactly the kind of Savior he planned to send; and he lets us see how **we** fit into his plan.

We begin a **major new** section of Isaiah's prophecy this Sunday. The "Servant Section" includes 14 chapters (ch. 40-53) of Isaiah's book. Does it **intrigue** you to know that the **essence** of God's plan of redemption is in **servant-hood**?! Indubitably, Jesus was thinking of Isaiah's book when he said, "...the Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:28).

A wit once suggested, "The key to everything is patience. You get the chicken by hatching the egg, not by smashing it open." God is not just a Perfect Planner, he is the Patient Planner. The really fascinating passage of this lesson is Isa. 42:1-4. There God gives the character blue-print of his Servant-Messiah. It will flood your soul with joy to be in Bible School this Sunday and discuss it.

If you wish to be a leader you will be frustrated, for very few people wish to be led. If you aim to be a servant you will never be frustrated--all of us need to be served. Jesus was The Servant--let us strive to be like him! --ptb

QUESTIONS:

1. What is the comfort to come to Jerusalem? 40:1ff
2. Who is the Voice 40:3-5, and what is his message 40:3-11?
3. Name 6 attributes of Jehovah in 40:12-31. Why does Isaiah devote so much space to this characterization of God?
4. How did God expect Israel to respond to his character? 41:1-20
5. What is the primary way to prove the only One True God? 41:21-29. Does this apply to so-called idols today?
6. Who is the Servant of Isa. 42:1-4 (see Matt. 12:18-21). Does Jesus mean this to characterize **our** lives?
7. Why say you as a covenant? 42:6
8. What did God choose Israel to do as his servants? 43:10,12
9. What is the new thing the Lord is talking about in 43:18-19

William James, famous philosopher and psychologist, believed that every person ought to do an unpleasant duty every day just to keep himself in moral trim. The moral "muscles" grow with exercise and use. If we want to be strong in the service of the Lord, we must use "moral muscle" every day! It is like the youngster of mythology who picked up a newborn calf in the field. Every day he went out and lifted it in his arms. Since the calf's weight increased only a little each day, the young man did not notice the increase. By continuing to lift the calf day after day, his strength grew with the calf's weight so that he could still lift it after it had grown into a full-sized bull. "Spiritual muscle"--use it or lose it!

LESSON TEXT: Isaiah 44:1---48:22

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Some of the incidents to be studied in this lesson will be very interesting, indeed! You won't want to miss Isaiah's humorous story about the man cooking his meal in front of his totem pole; there is the prediction of a man's name 200 years before he is born; there is the picture of "gods" being taken prisoner; and there is the title of a Christian hymn.

The main point of this lesson, however, is the **power** of the coming Servant-Messiah. When God portrayed his Servant as meek and gentle, not even quenching a dimly burning wick (42:1-4), the covenant people of God would naturally question, "How will such a wimpy Messiah ever deliver us from enemies or restore Messianic destiny to us?" God gives the answer through Isaiah--God's Servant-Messiah will be: (a) Sovereign over all gods ch. 44; (b) Sovereign in salvation, ch. 45; (c) Sovereign over all nations, ch. 46-47; (d) Sovereign in all wisdom, ch. 48.

It may not appear to you at first that this section is referring to the Messiah. But there are little hints scattered here and there which show God is talking about his ultimate Servant-Redeemer. The Messiah-Servant is **typified and prophesied** in the nation of Israel and in the pagan emperor, Cyrus! Now isn't that very interesting? This Servant is also referred to as "The Holy One of Israel" and "Redeemer" (Isa. 44:6; 45:11-13; 45:24; 48:16, etc.). Our lesson makes it clear the **power** which the Servant shall exercise will be primarily in teaching, leading and loving, not in coercion or force (Isa. 44:3,8,22; 45:19,23; 46:10; 48:7,16,17ff). His control will be established by his righteousness and justice. He will prove who he is by mighty works and wonders, but his authority over mankind will be by people's choosing him over false "gods."

God sent the Messiah (Jesus Christ of Nazareth) to serve **us** by working out **our** atonement and salvation. We must give up **pride** and **accept** him as **our Servant**.

--ptb

QUESTIONS:

1. Who is going to surname himself "Israel"? When? 44:3-5
2. What is the point of Isaiah's funny story about the idolater? 44:9-22
3. Who is Cyrus? Why would God anoint him? 44:28; 45:13
4. What is the main evidence God uses to prove who he is? 44:7,26; 45:4,21,23; 46:10; 48:3,5,6,7,8,15,16
5. Why can't people see the stupidity of making idols and calling them gods? 46:5-7. Could the answer be in chapter 47?
6. How could God try the house of Jacob in the furnace of affliction for **his own sake**? 48:9-11. Isn't that a little sadistic?
7. Who is the "me" accompanied by the Lord's Spirit in 48:16?
8. Are the Lord's teachings really profitable? 48:17. How?
9. Is there really no peace for the wicked? 48:22. Why would David say the wicked are always at ease, increasing in riches? Psa. 73:12; see Job. 12:6; Jer. 12:1; Psa. 37:35; 73:3.

In American slang, a white elephant is something useless to its owner. Rummage sales used to have lots of white elephants.

In Thailand, the white elephant is a symbol of great honor.

Some years ago, a medical missionary, **Dr. Garland Bare**, was given the "Most Exalted Order of the White Elephant" by the king of Thailand. He went there to **serve** the King of Kings, but the king of Thailand recognized his **service** to the country. Your **service** and mine may not be recognized here on earth, and we may not receive honors during our lives here. But Jesus assures us that even the cup of cold water given in loving **service** will be recognized and honored in Heaven.

---1000 Windows, by Robert C. Shannon

LESSON TEXT: Isaiah 49:1--51:23

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Pretend for a moment you are God! Let's say you want to come as a human being into our world to draw men away from the self-centered madness and despair they are in. You want to create a community dedicated to what is true, pure, and giving. You have the power, being God, to come to the world as any one you wish. Your only goal is to save people from their own depravity and make them fit to live in your presence. What would you change yourself into? Perhaps a pragmatic politician. You could organize a massive bureaucracy to further organize into committees to deal with human problems. You could pass laws against evil, finance foundations to study poverty problems, and by taxing those with incomes enough to give to those without incomes so that everyone is equal hoping to eliminate crime, hunger, ghettos and dissatisfaction.

Or, you might come as a military hero. You could overpower people with an army. You would then be able to order them to do what is right. If they didn't you could threaten them or punish them or banish them. You could do everyone's thinking for them--tell them what was right and wrong and offer no mercy to the disobedient. Forcing men to be good would surely work! You might want to come as an entertainer or an artist and create charisma or a sub-culture. You could emotionalize people into following your life-style. No one would have to think--they would just follow your "vibes" or theirs. After all, if people can be made to feel good they must have the truth—right?

Jehovah God came to the world as **The Teacher**. Isaiah predicts the program of the **Servant**; it will be one of ruling people's hearts through teaching God's truth. Now teaching is not very high on the scale of vocational value. Most people believe that the greatest helpers of mankind are scientists, financiers, tradesmen, or legislators. But God chose to send his Servant to be The Teacher. Teaching is the ultimate in serving. Everyone is a teacher, for we teach even by what we do. Teaching does not patronize, force or manipulate. It respects the integrity and freedom of the individual. You will want to be in Bible School and learn from **The Teacher**.

"And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying..." Matt. 5:1

QUESTIONS:

1. After reading all that is said of the Servant in Isa. 49:1-13, can you identify this Servant? Why complain he has labored in vain? 49:4
2. Why would Zion think the Lord had forsaken her? 49:14
3. When would Zion say, The place is too narrow for me 49:19-23
4. Did God divorce Israel? 50:1 (read the story in Hosea).
5. Who is the one given the tongue of those who are taught? 50:4-9 (see also Isa. 8:16; 30:20; 54:13).
6. Why refer to Abraham and Sarah? 51:1-3
7. How could there be people in the OT times who had God's law written on their hearts? 51:7. Isn't that only for NT times?
8. Why wasn't there a son among the Jews to give leadership and deliverance at the time of the captivities? 51:17-23

"Oh how I love thy law! It is my meditation all the day.
Thy commandment makes me wiser than my enemies,
for it is ever with me.

I have more understanding than all my teachers, for thy
testimonies are my meditation.

I understand more than the aged, for I keep thy precepts.

I hold back my feet from every evil way, in order to keep thy word.

I do not turn aside from thy ordinances, for thou hast taught me.

How sweet are thy words to my taste, sweeter than honey to
my mouth!

Through thy precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate
every false way." --Psalms 119:97-104

LESSON TEXT: Isaiah 52:1--53:12

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS.:

Bishop G. Bromley Oxnam, former head of the World Council of Churches wrote: "We hear much of the substitutionary theory of the atonement. This theory to me is immoral. If Jesus paid it all, or if He is the substitute for me, or if He is the sacrifice for all the sin of the world, then why discuss forgiveness? The books are closed. Another has paid the debt, borne the penalty. I owe nothing. I am absolved. I cannot see forgiveness as predicated upon the act of some one else. It is my sin. I must atone."--*A Testament of Faith*, p. 144, Boston, 1958. Canon V. F. Storrs, in his book, *The Problem of the Cross*, writes: "I dismiss from my mind all ideas of substitution, or of the innocent paying the penalty of the guilty because these ideas offend my moral consciousness."

The vicarious atonement of the Servant of God (Messiah) cannot be rationalized--it has to be believed! God revealed it in the Bible. He did not command anyone to understand it with human reason. He only expects people to accept it by faith. We believe Jesus is the substitute for our sins because he was **physically** and **historically resurrected** from the dead. That **can** be understood by reason because it is an historical fact based on credible testimony. Walter Scott, the famous Christian Church evangelist, declared that the Messiahship of Jesus was based on the credible testimony concerning his miracles, fulfilled prophecies, and his bodily resurrection. Jesus's authority to be believed in all other matters is based on his Messiahship.

Animal sacrifices and human works of merit can never clear the human conscience--that demands the atoning death of a perfectly sinless human--God himself in human form. Isaiah wrote, "Who has believed what we have heard?" (53:1). Without faith it is impossible to please God because without faith we will not accept the atoning death of Jesus for our sins. If we do not believe that we are still in our sins.

"For the love of Christ controls us; because we are **convinced**
that one has died for all; therefore all have died."

----2 Cor. 5:14

QUESTIONS:

1. What are the beautiful garments Zion is to put on? 52:1
2. Who is the messenger; what are the good tidings? 52:7
3. Where is the NT quotation of Isa. 52:7? What is the connection?
4. Why were men astonished at the marred visage of The Servant? 52:13-14
5. Why does Isaiah say: Who has believed what we have heard? 53:1
6. Why was the Servant-Messiah rejected when he came? 53:3. Is he still rejected for the same reasoning?
7. Does 53:4-5 indicate Jesus's atoning death also provides physical healing to all believers? Why not? Maybe all believers don't have enough faith to be healed?
8. The death of the Messiah is taught here by Isaiah--is it taught anywhere else? (See Dan. 9:24-27). Is his resurrection also taught? (Lk. 24:25ff).
9. What was the knowledge the Servant had to have to make many to be accounted righteous? 53:11

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

The Suffering Servant's atoning death made available forgiveness, and imputed righteousness and everlasting life. The Suffering Servant himself is God's covenant to the world (Isa. 42:6; 49:8). But a covenant has to have ways and means by which it may be **appropriated** (i.e., accepted) if it is to accomplish its purpose.

Human beings make covenants with one another all the time. If you get married, you covenant to love, honor, and be subject to one another until death parts you. When you borrow from a bank, you have to enter into a covenant which usually states as a condition that you repay the loan in full, with interest, in a stipulated time period. Nations make covenants (treaties) with one another--each stating conditions of agreement. The next two weeks we will be investigating the Covenant section of Isaiah's prophecy. God has created ways and means by which people may accept his covenant in the Servant.

Some people think of covenanting with God in terms of formalities, rituals, and ceremonies. But remember, the Christian's covenant with God is **in a Person!** How do you appropriate a Person? How do you get a Person **in you?** Jesus said it succinctly: "Except you eat my flesh and drink my blood you have no life (i.e., covenant) in you" (Jn. 6:53). You get **in** a Person by getting that Person **in you!** We have Christ formed in us by faith (Gal. 4:19; Eph. 3:17). We are transformed into his image gradually by acknowledging his glory (2 Cor. 3:18). We are in him by faith and obedience (Gal. 3:26-27; Rom. 6:1-5). Jesus said we eat his flesh and drink his blood by believing and keeping his word (Jn. 6:63; 14:23; 15:10). We become one with Christ when, by faith and faithfulness, we are married to him. Spiritually, we covenant to be his bride as we become members of his church, Eph. 5:21-33.

God has offered to make you an heir to his infinite riches in Christ. He has extended these riches to you in a covenant Person--Jesus. You must accept his terms as he has specified them in his New Testament.

---ptb

QUESTIONS:

1. How could the desolate one have more children than the one married? 54:1-4. Why enlarge the place of their tents? (See 49:19-23)
2. Why does the Bible use marriage so often to picture the relationship God wants with believers? 54:5-8. How many other places can you think of in the Bible that uses marriage as a divine symbol?
3. How do you know this chapter (54) is Messianic? (See Isa. 54:13 & Jn. 6:45).
4. What is the point of Isaiah 55:1-2? Is it Messianic? (Cf. 55:3 with Acts 13:34).
5. The word "For" in Isa. 55:10 shows connection to Isa. 55:6-9--what is the connection?
6. Is keeping the Sabbath a part of the Messianic age? 56:1-2
7. Why mention eunuchs? 56:4
8. What is so startling about foreigners ministering to the Lord? 56:6-7
9. How did God gather yet others besides those already gathered? 56:8 (see John 10:16).

"The story of Biblical faith is the story of a relationship. The basis of that relationship was an agreement called covenant. Biblical history is the record of how that relationship fared. Covenanted relationship represents a certain approach to life and is therefore properly called a philosophy ...The New Testament scriptures tell the story of the beginnings of what was [early] Christianity. The last book of the NT foresees grave difficulties facing God's new people, as terrifying as dragons, strange beasts, wicked cities, and as dangerous to men of faith as a cultured, beautiful and available woman. In spite of all such difficulties, the Messiah is shown to win in the end, bring history to a halt, judge all men and give to each his due, reunite heaven with earth and restore men to fellowship with God. Such is the Biblical story. It is the story of a magnificent God and His God-creature, man, their difficulties and their reconciliation. It is the story of a relationship and of the agreement that made the relationship possible.

It is the story of covenant."

--Mont Smith in

What The Bible Says About Covenant, pp. 1,4

LESSON TEXT: Isaiah 57:1---59:21

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Miguel Cervantes wrote in *Don Quixote*: "An honest man's word is as good as his bond." Marcus Aurelius Antoninus (Roman emperor and philosopher, A.D. 121) said: "Never esteem anything as of advantage to you that will make you break your word or lose your self-respect." The word of person to person is the glue which holds society together. When the word of a person or a nation is not kept, social chaos ensues. The root of mankind's unfaithfulness to his fellow-man lies in man's unfaithfulness to God.

The lesson for this Lord's Day is a vivid picture of the human misery resulting from covenant-breaking. Isaiah's people were filled with lust, violence, child abuse, religious hypocrisy, inhumanity to the poor, obscenity, irreverence, lying, cheating, injustice, corruption, bloodshed, and crookedness. The people were not oblivious to all this, either, for they looked for light, and behold darkness (59:9) they stumbled, growled and moaned, but their condition worsened. Truth had fallen in the public squares (59:14). Anyone who tried to turn from evil became like a hunted animal. They were wearied with their wickedness, but they did not say, "It is hopeless" (57:10)--they kept right on in wicked covenant-breaking.

Breaking covenant with God by disobeying his word will work wretchedness. Psychological and physical suffering inexorably follow in the wake of unfaithfulness to the principles and precepts of the Bible. Men and women today despise God's word about marriage, work, civil obedience, neighbor's property, children and a multitude of other things. More significantly, they despise God's covenant of grace through Jesus Christ. They do not trust him, they are unfaithful to him, and they do not intend to keep his word. So, the world is filled with misery.

Thank God there is a community where men are really trying to be faithful to God's covenant and to one another. It is the community of the sanctified--the church of Christ. Part of its efforts to cultivate faithfulness is in studying God's word in the Bible School hour. Be there! It's your future!

To make your children capable of honesty is the beginning of education
--John Ruskin

QUESTIONS:

1. Could a society ever get so bad that when a righteous man perishes, no one would lay it to heart? 57:1. Is it still happening that way?
2. What was wrong with setting up their symbols behind the doorpost? 57:8. Where is your symbol? (see Matt. 5:14-16).
3. Where is God's house? 57:14-15. Where is God's house today?
4. What is real fasting? 58:3-12. Should we fast today?
5. Are covenant-keepers (believers) really those riding high? 58:13-14
6. How does sin effect a separation between man and God? 59:1-8. Why?
7. Do our sins testify against us, or to God, or to others? 59:9-15
8. When the Lord saw there was no one to intervene what did he do? 59:15-20
9. Why is the Lord's spirit connected to his word? 59:21

Michelangelo, painting the matchless frescoes on the high ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, spent countless hours on his back from high scaffolding, carefully perfecting the details of each figure. A friend asked him why he took such pains with figures which could be seen only at a distance by viewers. "After all," said the friend, "who will know whether it is perfect or not?" "I will," replied the artist.
--Sam. M. Fleming

"Trust that has been built over a lifetime can be destroyed in a moment, by a betrayal of the basic ingredients upon which that trust was established. Trust is a treasured item and relationship. Once it is tarnished, it is hard to restore to its original glow." --William A Ward

LESSON TEXT: Isaiah 60:1---62:12
Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Whether it is Sir Thomas More's *Utopia*, James Hilton's *Shangri-La*, or Plato's *Republic*, men have been dreaming of the perfect community ever since Nimrod tried to establish it with the Tower of Babel. New Harmony, Indiana, was Robert Owens's try at it; Liberal, Missouri, was another naive experiment. Communism was another miserable failure--so is the United Nations! But men keep on trying without God and keep on failing.

Cities and nations are filled with greed, poverty, violence, corruption and exploitation. The weak are victimized and the needy ignored. There is misery, destruction and disfranchisement in all communities. People forsake one nation or city for another only to find the inevitable human depravity--perhaps more sophisticated--but depravity nevertheless!

But how would you **really** like to find *Shangri-La*, *Utopia*, and *Eden* all wrapped up in one? Isaiah predicted its establishment--he called it "Zion." It was to be a community which would possess the wealth of all the world; it would not have any violence or destruction in it; there would be no prisoners, no afflicted, no mourning--only joy. Citizens of this community would reap the rewards of their labors and all would have abundance; no one would feel forsaken in this city; it would have day and night protection from its watchmen and its King; and all its inhabitants would be good, true and helping people.

Isaiah's "Zion" is the church of Christ, the kingdom of God. Jesus made that perfectly clear when he quoted Isaiah 61:1-2 in the synagogue at Nazareth (Lk. 4:16-30) and said, "**Today** is this scripture **fulfilled** in your ears." Paul confirmed it when he called "Zion" the Christian community in Heb. 12:22. You will want to be in Bible School this Lord's Day to contemplate and celebrate your heavenly citizenship.

God has prepared a *Utopian City* for people who feel like strangers in this world. Citizenship is by faith in Christ, and someday it will be the only city in a new creation!
Heb. 11:13-16---it is Christ's Church!

QUESTIONS:

1. Does Isa. 60:1-14 refer to a restored Jewish nation after captivity? Anything else? How do you know?
2. Which Zion has overseers with characters of peace and righteousness? 60:17-18. After the captivity? (See Malachi)? In Jesus's day? (See Matt. 23).
3. If Zion here is the Messianic age, why won't the sun be there? 60:19-22.
4. Upon whom is the Spirit of the Lord to be? 61:1-4 (cf. Lk. 4:16-31).
5. How is Messiah's people to eat the wealth of the nations? 61:5-7
6. What is the world to acknowledge about Messiah's people? 61:8-11
7. What was Zion's new name to be? 61:1-5
8. What is to be done about food for the new Zion? 62:1-9
9. What does God want done in calling people to citizenship in Zion? 62:10-12

"Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp,
Or what's a heaven for?"
--Robert Browning

"The world has forgotten, in its concern with
Left and Right, that there is an
Above and Below."
--Glen Drake

LESSON TEXT: Isaiah 63:1--66:24
Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Isaiah predicted staggering, mind-boggling things for God's covenant people. All through his ministry he spoke of a future where there would be prosperity, wealth, power over those who opposed them, peace and security for Zion. He talked about a great Leader from the family of David who would rule in justice and righteousness. From what Isaiah said, the future for Zion was much more glorious than the golden age when David himself ruled Israel from earth-bound Zion. In Isaiah chs. 63-64 (esp. 63:15--64:12) "pictures" his contemporaries as no longer able to contain themselves--they insist that God deliver, right-now, on his promises. "O that thou wouldst rend the heavens and come down." Man is always trying to run ahead of God.

What God, through Isaiah, was intending to predict for those with faith to accept it was, God was going to "come down" and create a change in the nature of man. He was going to make it possible for the divine image to be restored to man. Even a rebuilt Garden of Eden would be of no value to unregenerated people—they would turn it right back into a cursed and fallen world again! So, in chapter 65, Isaiah describes the refining, regenerating process God is going to initiate to produce this new Zion; in chapter 66 the prophet predicts (a) the burial of old Zion (i.e., Judaism); (b) the birth of new Zion (i.e., the NT church); (c) the building of an ultimate Zion (i.e., the consummation and heaven).

Through the ages people have not been much different from those in Isaiah's day. The Jews insisted that the kingdom of God was primarily changed circumstances. Jesus had to change that earthly insistence. He kept preaching that it was primarily changed people. Even the apostles themselves kept wanting an earthly Utopia. What about you and me? Is our anticipation of the kingdom just pearly gates and golden streets—or is it primarily our transformation into the image of Jesus Christ?

Millions long for an eternal heaven who do not know
what to do with 52 Sundays here on earth! --ptb

QUESTIONS:

1. Who is this one with the blood-stained garments coming from Edom? What has he been doing? 63:1-9
2. What has been the response of Israel to what the blood-stained-one has done? 63:10-14
3. Now that they are about to suffer the consequences of rejecting this one, what is their plea? 63:15--64-12
4. What is the Lord's answer to their plea? 65:1-12
5. Have they all rejected the blood-stained-one? What does God have to say about them? 65:13-16
6. What will God make of these few who have trusted him? 65:17-25
7. Why must old Zion be buried? 66:1-6
8. How long will it take God to give birth to new Zion from the old? 66:7-14
9. What will be God's method of building or increasing new Zion? 66:15-24

A Suggested Resolution --by Henry H. Halley

Believing that Christ founded the Church;
that the Church exists to propagate Christ's influence;
that the Church's method of doing this is meeting together frequently
in Christ's name;
that God himself planned the frequency, weekly;
and gave us a day for it, Sunday, the Lord's Day;
and, inasmuch as common usage recognizes Sunday morning
as Church-time;

I hereby pledge myself that as long as I live, wherever I may be,
unless hindered by sickness or necessity,
on Sunday morning I will go to church,
trying to do it with one motive only;
for Christ.

I will try to go on time, and, I will be reverent in Church
and all my life I will be a reader of God's Word.