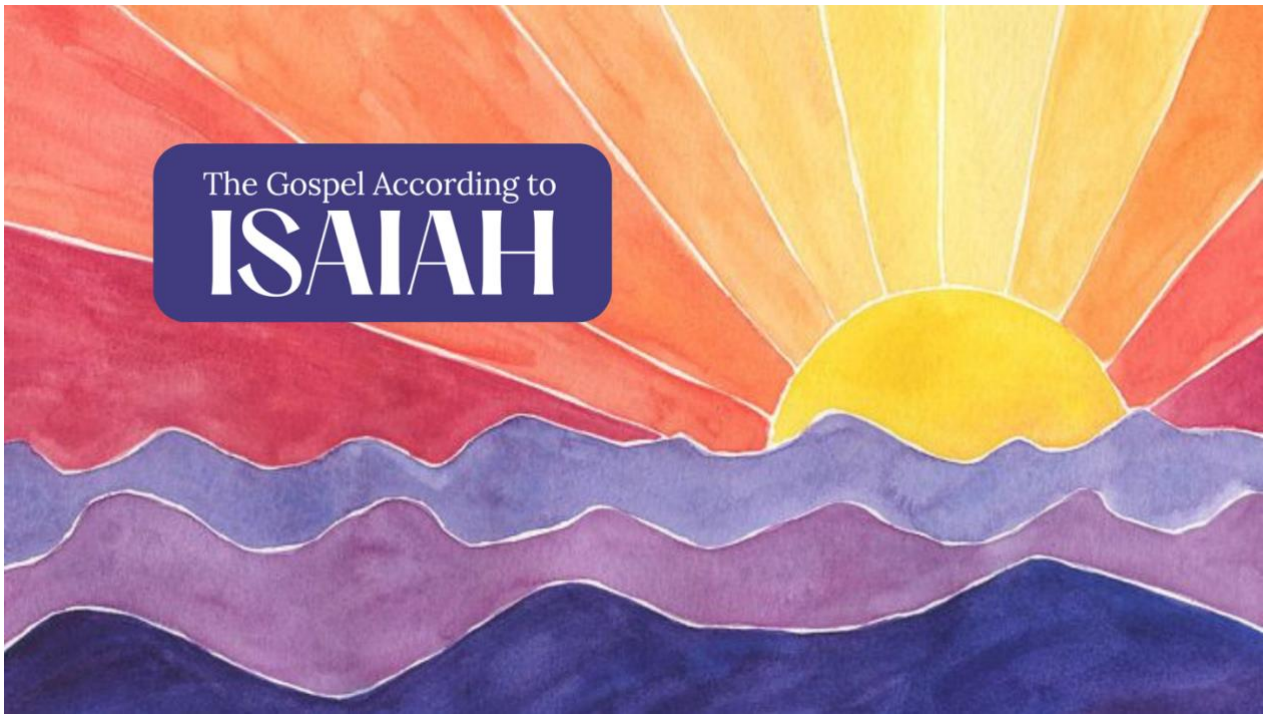


Growth Groups Material
(9 studies on Isaiah 40-66)
May-June 2025

JANNALI
Anglican Church

Teaching Schedule

In our gatherings we will work through a 9 part series:

1-4 May	Isaiah 40:1-31
8-11 May	Isaiah 42:1-17
15-18 May	Isaiah 44:1-23
22-25 May	Isaiah 44:24-45:25
29 May-1 Jun	Isaiah 49:1-13
5-8 June	Isaiah 52:13-53:12
12-15 June	Isaiah 55:1-13
19-22 June	Isaiah 61:1-11, 65:17-24
26-29 June	Isaiah 66:1-24

Booklet Contents

Introduction	p.3
Study 1 (Isaiah 40:1-31)	p.8
Study 2 (Isaiah 42:1-17)	p.11
Study 3 (Isaiah 44:1-23)	p.15
Study 4 (Isaiah 44:24-45:25)	p.18
Study 5 (Isaiah 49:1-13)	p.21
Study 6 (Isaiah 52:13-53:12)	p.24
Study 7 (Isaiah 55:1-13)	p.27
Study 8 (Isaiah 61:1-11, 65:17-24)	p.29
Study 9 (Isaiah 66:1-24)	p.31
Lifeboat List Prayer Tool	p.33

Additional Resources

We've put together some additional resources that might help you as you make your way through this series:

https://jannalianglican.org.au/isaiah-40-66/

Introduction

We've all heard of the book of Isaiah. It seems like one of those big and important books in the Old Testament, spanning 66 chapters. It's quoted many times in the New Testament, second only to the Psalms in frequency. But making sense of it feels like a daunting prospect. It's complex! Like lots of prophetic literature, there are strange images, and (to many minds) a frustrating lack of chronological, or even, logical order. Despite these hurdles, there is much to be gained from examining this part of God's Word.

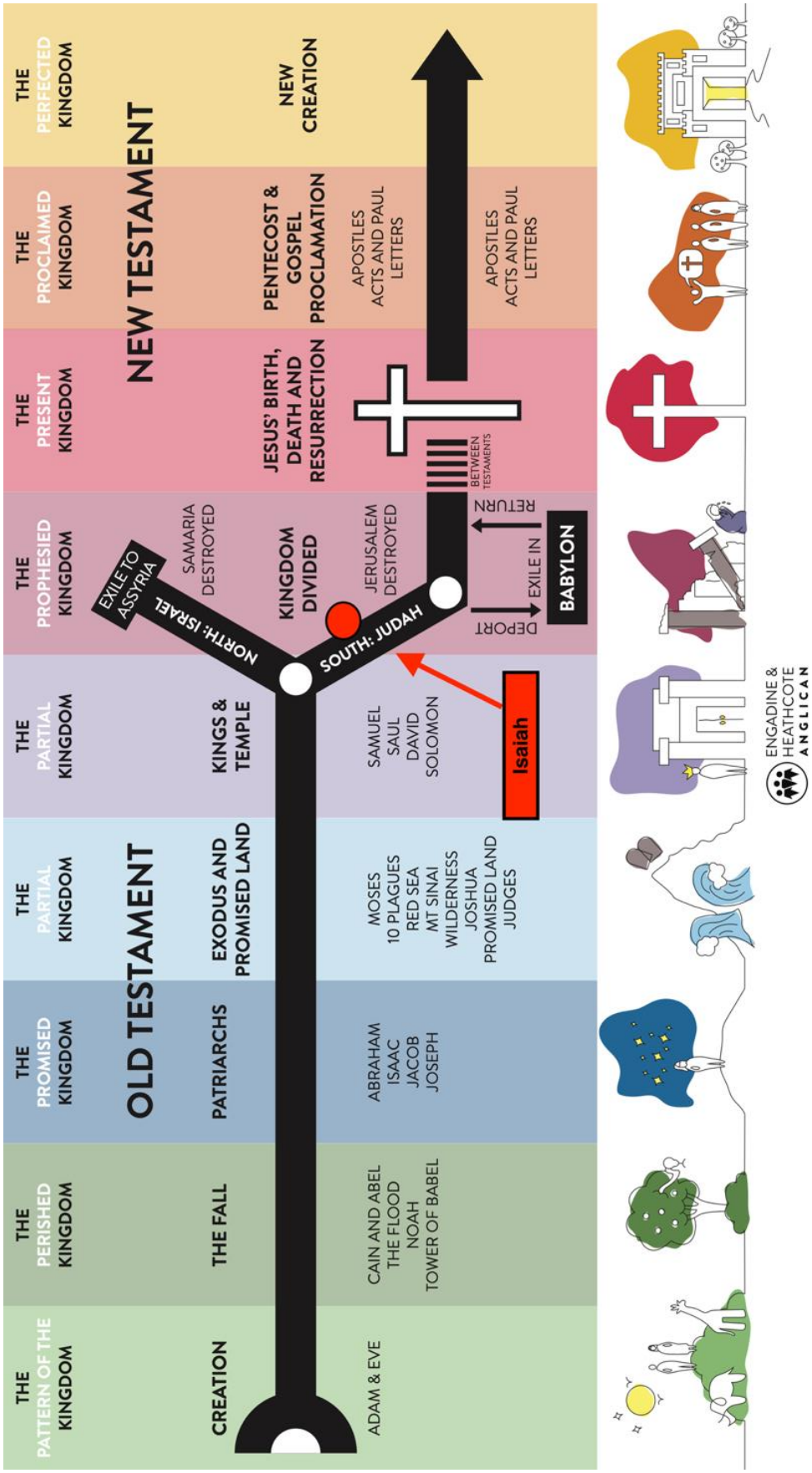
This term, we're focusing on the second part of the book, chapters 40-66. In a world weighed down by uncertainty, fear, and brokenness, Isaiah 40-66 delivers to us God's words of comfort, hope, and unstoppable promise. The images of salvation and relief from trouble that we will read are stunning, colourful, moving, and in many cases, very familiar to us, as readers of the New Testament. These chapters invite us into the heart of God's rescue plan — from the announcement of forgiveness to the unveiling of a Servant King, and the breathtaking vision of a new heaven and new earth. It's for these reasons that we've named the series *The Gospel According to Isaiah*.

It will be crucial, to understand something of the historical context surrounding what we read. Although written many years prior, Isaiah 40-66 appears to be addressed to the generation of Jews experiencing the

Babylonian exile. By way of reminder, the Northern Kingdom of Israel was wiped out by the Assyrians in 722BC. This was around the time of Isaiah's ministry. But the Southern Kingdom of Judah was to be conquered by the next big empire – the Babylonians. History tells us that this happened around 605-586BC. The exile generation has seen Jerusalem, God's chosen city, destroyed. They've seen God's temple looted and raised to the ground. They have been taken from their promised land; their kings have been killed or are kept in prisons. Meanwhile the Babylonians boast that Marduk (their chief god) has defeated the God of Israel. At this time, God's people were asking questions like:

- Has God abandoned about us?
- When will this suffering finally end?
- Can God really be trusted to deliver on his promises?

We all ask similar questions, don't we? Whilst our relationship to God and our exposure to God's revelation is significantly different after Jesus, we also find ourselves exiled from our true home, heaven. We're surrounded by people of different faiths, or none. We wonder if we'll ever experience all the incredible blessings that we've been promised. Rest assured, in Isaiah, God assures us that we can trust him to deliver, and He will do it in a stunning, glorious manner! As we work through some of the key passages in these chapters you will find some of the richest, heart-warming parts of the Bible. We're praying that God's Spirit will both, help us to understand what we're reading, and use His Word to shape us into the likeness of Jesus.


THE PATTERN OF THE KINGDOM
THE PERISHED KINGDOM
THE PROMISED KINGDOM
THE PARTIAL KINGDOM
THE PARTIAL KINGDOM
THE PROPHESIED KINGDOM
THE PRESENT KINGDOM
THE PROCLAIMED KINGDOM
THE PERFECTED KINGDOM
OLD TESTAMENT
NEW TESTAMENT
CREATION
ADAM & EVE
THE FALL
CAIN AND ABEL
THE FLOOD
NOAH
TOWER OF BABEL
PATRIARCHS
ABRAHAM
ISAAC
JACOB
JOSEPH
EXODUS AND PROMISED LAND
MOSES
10 PLAGUES
RED SEA
MT SINAI
WILDERNESS
JOSHUA
PROMISED LAND
JUDGES
KINGS & TEMPLE
SAMUEL
SAUL
DAVID
SOLOMON
Isaiah
NORTH: ISRAEL
EXILE TO ASSYRIA
SAMARIA DESTROYED
KINGDOM DIVIDED
SOUTH: JUDAH
JERUSALEM DESTROYED
DEPORT
EXILE IN
BABYLON
RETURN
BETWEEN TESTAMENTS
JESUS' BIRTH, DEATH AND RESURRECTION
APOSTLES ACTS AND PAUL LETTERS
PENTECOST & GOSPEL PROCLAMATION
APOSTLES ACTS AND PAUL LETTERS
NEW CREATION
ENGADINE & HEATHCOTE ANGLICAN

Page left intentionally blank (use for notes, prayer points etc)

Page left intentionally blank (use for notes, prayer points etc)

Study 1 | Isaiah 40:1-31

Introduction

1. Have you ever felt totally abandoned by God? If not, what kind of circumstances do you think might lead to that feeling?

2. **Read Psalm 137**. How were God's people feeling during their exile in Babylon?

Read and Discuss

3. **Read Isaiah 40:1-11**. How would you summarize the message of comfort being delivered?

4. If you were an Israelite exiled in Babylon, how might you respond to these words?

5. **Read Isaiah 40:12-31**. What is the picture of God being presented in these verses? Can you think of 1-2 adjectives to describe God based on these verses?

6. Why would such a picture of God be necessary to accompany the promises of verses 1-11?

Reflect and Apply

7. Read Luke 3:1-6. How does Luke see Isaiah 40 being fulfilled?

8. The Israelites in exile were lamenting, “God doesn’t see us, our claim is ignored” (Isaiah 40:27). After Jesus, could a Christian ever say something like that?

9. It's easy to evaluate God's kindness towards us according to our present circumstances (both good and bad). How does Isaiah 40 encourage us to adopt a different approach?

10. In some ways, we inhabit a similar space to the Israelites being addressed in Isaiah 40. Peter describes God's chosen people as exiles (1 Peter 1:1). Similarly, Paul writes that our true home is not here on earth, but in heaven (Phil 3:2). How can we go about fixing our hopes on our future salvation, as opposed to the things of here and now?

Study 2 | Isaiah 42:1-17

Introduction

1. From your existing knowledge of the Bible, would you say God's Old Testament people, that is the Israelites, had a job to do? What was it?

Read and Discuss

2. Let's think for a moment about the role God originally intended for his chosen people, Israel. **Read Genesis 12:1-3, Exodus 19:4-6, Deuteronomy 4:5-8**. From these verses how would you summarize:

    a. The relationship between God and Israel; and

    b. The role of Israel in representing God to the nations

3. One of the big features in Isaiah 40-66 is the introduction of a figure known as God's 'servant'. **Read Isaiah 41:8-10**. Who is the Lord's servant in this passage?

4. From your knowledge of the Old Testament, how would you assess Israel's job in performing the role God had given to them? **Read Isaiah 42:18-25**. How is Israel's failure to perform their God-given mission described?

5. Isaiah 42:1-9 stands in contrast to 42:18-25 and speak more positively about the 'servant' figure. **Read Isaiah 42:1-9**. What do we learn about the 'servant' figure:

    a. What is the character of the servant?

    b. What is the mission of the servant?

    c. What is God's relationship to the servant?

Reflect and Apply

6. **Read Matt 12:9-21**. How does Matthew see Jesus fulfilling the servant role of Isaiah 42?

7. What can we learn from this servant figure about the best way to approach injustice? How is this different to the usual approach adopted by those with power in our world?

8. Some theologians see an 'hourglass' shape to the big storyline of the Bible, especially as it relates to the identity of 'God's people'. To generalise this idea, we could say that the scope of God's relationship with humanity was initially the entire creation, then focuses on Israel and, then ultimately Jesus, the true human/Israelite. After Jesus God's people extends out again to all nations through the church. See the graphic below for a visual representation of this concept. How can a theme like this help us understand the identity of the servant in Isaiah?

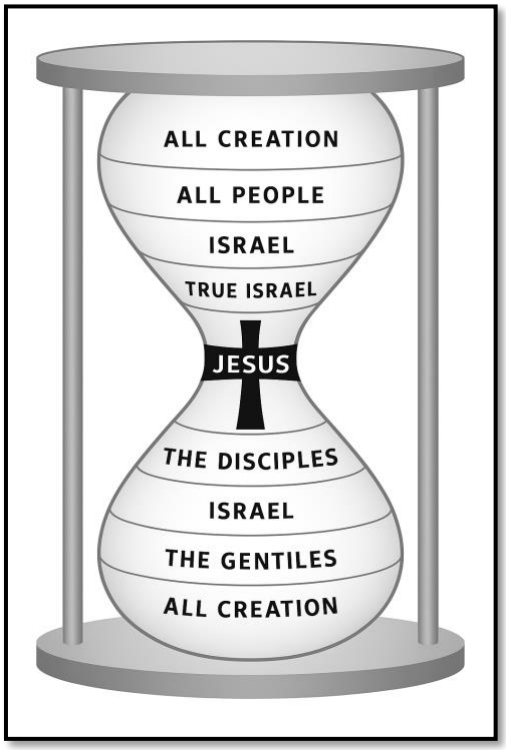


Image Credit: *Two Cities (9 Interactive Bible Studies on Isaiah),* Matthias Media, 2009

Page left intentionally blank (use for notes, prayer points etc)

Study 3 | Isaiah 44:1-23

Introduction

1. How would you define an idol? Which culture do you think is more prone to idol worship: ancient cultures like what we read about in the Bible, or modern cultures like 21st Century Australia?

Read and Discuss

2. **Read Isaiah 44:1-8**. What is the promise, and the assurance that God is giving his people in these verses?

3. **Read 44:9-20**. What tone do you sense being used in this section? What is being critiqued?

4. **Read Isaiah 44:21-23**. God's people are called to 'remember' what's conveyed in the preceding verses. Why must God's people keep remembering the folly of idolatry?

Reflect and Apply

5. Our idols could be defined as the things we love, trust and serve. We can discern them be asking questions like, *(1) "Where does your mind wander when you are daydreaming?", (2) "What do I spend all my spare money on?", (3) "What's that one thing, that if I get it, will finally make me happy", or (4) "What's that one thing, that if I lose, will make life unbearable?"* Can you think of other questions like this that might help identify our idols. Choose one or two of the questions and answer them for yourself.

6. Why do you think the crafting and worship of idols was (and remains) so infuriating to God?

7. Imagine you are in Isaiah's shoes, and you are tasked with writing a mockery of modern Australian idolatry? What kinds of things might you say?

8. Barry Webb writes: “Our eyes and ears are constantly bombarded with lies about God and attractive alternatives to serving him.” How can we guard ourselves against slipping into idolatrous ways of thinking?

Study 4 | Isaiah 44:24-45:25

Introduction

1. "God does as he pleases!" Discuss the meaning of this sentence. Is this a good or a bad thing?

Read and Discuss

2. **Read Isaiah 44:24-45:8**. In these verses we hear of God's plan to use Cyrus the Great, leader of the rising Persian empire, to conquer Babylon and release Israel to return to their land. We get a very big picture of God here. What lines stand out to you and why?

3. **Read 45:9-13**. What do you think is Israel's objection to God's plans? How does God respond to their objection?

4. **Read Isaiah 45:14-25**. How do these verses convey the great reversal of fortunes that God's exiled people will experience?

5. What is the invitation offered by God to all nations, on the back of revealing himself to be the only true God?

Reflect and Apply

6. **Read Ezra 1:1-4**. These verses speak of the historical fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy. Cyrus led the Persians to defeat the Babylonians and then permitted the Jews to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple. How do instances of prophecy so clearly fulfilled, such as this, strengthen our faith?

7. In Isaiah 45 we're taught that God uses evil people and awful events to bring about his purposes. How does this truth sit with you? What is your reaction to this concept?

8. Are there areas in your life where you've questioned God's way of doing things? What might this passage be teaching you?

9. Isaiah 45:23 is alluded to in Philippians 2:9-11. Is ‘bending the knee’ in submission to Jesus optional?

Study 5 | Isaiah 49:1-13

Introduction

1. Put yourself in the shoes of the Old Testament people of God. For most of their history they had been at war with the nations around them. Their national identity was built on God's choice of them to be his special people, distinct from other nations. How do you think they felt towards the nations around them?

Read and Discuss

2. **Read Isaiah 49:1-13**. Can you identify the different speakers in this passage, and the verses which belong to them?

3. Focusing now on the first-person speaker (verses 1-5), form a list of all the things we learn about them? Consider their history, their objective, their future.

4. What is unusual about verse 4? How does the mission of this figure evolve after this change?

5. What is the picture being painted in verses 9-12? **Read Revelation 7:9-17**. Which verse draws upon Isaiah 49? How, then, might we understand the ultimate fulfillment of Isaiah 49:9-13?

Reflect and Apply

6. **Read Acts 13:42-52.** Who are Paul and Barnabas speaking to? How does Isaiah 49:6 shape their understanding of their mission?

7. According to this chapter, God clearly has a heart for the nations. How can we demonstrate the same commitment to seeing God's salvation extend to 'the ends of the earth'?

8. Recall the 'hourglass' shape to the biblical storyline (see study 2). How does chapter 49 continue to fill out that image? Where are we situated on that hourglass today? What is our role?

Page left intentionally blank (use for notes, prayer points etc)

Study 6 | Isaiah 52:13-53:12

Introduction

1. We've named the current teaching series 'the Gospel According to Isaiah. What do you like/dislike about this title? Are you persuaded that it's an appropriate title? Why or why not?

Read and Discuss

2. **Read Isaiah 52:13-53:12.** What do we learn about:
    a. The servant figure;
    b. The way people treated the servant;
    c. The way the servant responded to their suffering;
    d. The reason for the servant's suffering;
    e. The outcome of/the future after the servants suffering;

3. List all the parts of this passage for which you can find fulfillment in the person and work of Jesus?

Reflect and Apply

4. **Read Acts 8:26-35**. Pretend you are Phillip. What would you have told the eunuch after explaining that the passage was about Jesus?

5. If you are feeling guilt and shame about your sin, what comfort can be drawn from this passage from Isaiah?

6. **Read 1 Peter 2:18-25**, during which Peter quotes extensively from Isaiah 53. How are we called to follow the example of Jesus/the servant?

7. Reconsider question 1. Have your views changed/remain the same? What difference does Isaiah 52/53 make to your view?

Study 7 | Isaiah 55:1-13

Introduction

1. Have you ever been offered something that is too good to refuse? Tell the group about it.

Read and Discuss

2. **Read Isaiah 55:1-13.** God is making an incredible offer! Answer the following questions.
    a. What is God offering (metaphorically, literally)?

    b. What does it cost?

    c. Why the offering is being made by God?

    d. How is the offer received?

3. Imagine someone, after reading verses 1-7 doubts God's offer because it sounds too good to be true. How do verses 8-11 address that doubt?

4. **Read John 4:1-14**. Mount an argument that Jesus has Isaiah 55 in his mind during his conversation with the Samaritan woman? What themes do Isaiah 55 and John 4 have in common?

Reflect and Apply

5. How does verse 2 describe the human sinful condition in a new and insightful way?

6. If you have accepted this offer, are you finding satisfaction and delight in Jesus and salvation, or do you remain tempted to 'spend your money on lesser things?' What are these lesser things? Why are you tempted to seek satisfaction in them?

7. You're engaging with a friend who is convinced they are unworthy to be accepted by God. How could you use this passage to assure them?

Study 8 | Isaiah 61:1-11, 65:17-24

Introduction

1. Skim through the studies done so far. What have we learnt about the servant figure so far? In this study the same character emerges (although not described as the *servant*).

Read and Discuss

2. **Read Isaiah 61:1-11.** What words are used to describe the recipients of the good news?

3. Which verses in this section portray God's people as being publicly honoured by the world at large? Have you ever imagined salvation to entail that kind of public honour? Why would this image have been especially helpful for the Israelites in exile?

4. Consider verse 10. What is the model response to the salvation which God accomplishes and applies to his people?

5. **Read Luke 4:16–21**. What does Jesus' quotation of Isaiah 61:1–2 teach us about his identity and mission?

6. **Read Isaiah 65:17-24.** These verses describe the new creation which will be enjoyed by God's saved people. What aspects of the new creation described here most surprise you? Most excite you?

Reflect and Apply

7. Isaiah 61 seems to be written for Israelites in exile who feel broken-hearted, captive, mourning, despairing etc. Can we apply these words of comfort to ourselves, who live in a different phase of salvation history? Why or why not?

8. Which parts of Isaiah 61 do you consider already fulfilled in Christ? Which parts are we still awaiting?

Study 9 | Isaiah 66

Introduction

1. How would you summarize God's ultimate purposes for the world. In other words, what's is the main thing God is aiming for when he created/saved people?

Read and Discuss

2. **Read Isaiah 66:1-17.** The same phrase bookends this section. What is this phrase and what does it convey to the reader?

3. Who are the two groups of people discussed in this section? Write down all you can observe about what defines these people, and what God will do to/for them.

4. **Read Isaiah 66:18-24**. What do they teach us about God's ultimate goal for human history?

5. What do you consider to be the sign referred to in verse 19?

Reflect and Apply

6. What would it look like today to ‘tremble at God’s word’?

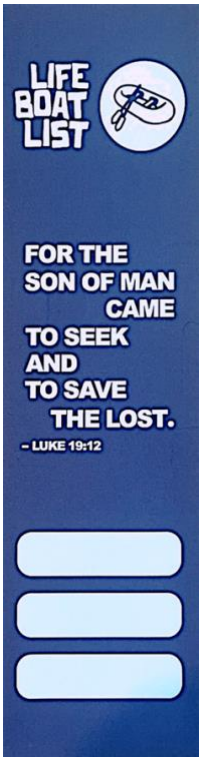
7. God’s ultimate purposes (see questions above), comprise both salvation and judgment. Why are both of these things necessary for God to achieve his purposes?

8. Thinking back over the term, what has strengthened your faith that God really will deliver his promised blessings to us?

Praying for our *lifeboat lists*

We know that everyone's greatest need in life is to be reconciled with God through Jesus so that their sins can be forgiven. We want lost people to be saved, and know the eternal hope of salvation, rather than perish under God's judgment.

A tool we use to help us pray regularly is our *lifeboat list.* These are bookmarks upon which we can list three people that we're deliberately praying for and actively working towards sharing Jesus with.



In our groups, it would be excellent to share with each other who is on our lifeboat lists, and pray together for each of these people, and our efforts to reach them.

You might like to use the next page record the name of the people you are praying for.

Praying for our *lifeboat lists*

Group Member	Lifeboat list

Page left intentionally blank (use for notes, prayer points etc)

JANNALI
Anglican Church