

## 6 Be faithful to the God who restores creation (Isaiah 56–66)

How would God restore his people who had fallen to the nations? *The arm of the LORD* would raise them up. *The servant of the LORD* would restore his fallen servant. How did you go as you meditated on promises like these from Isaiah 48–55?

.....

Tonight we conclude the Book of Isaiah. Some Jews returned from exile and settled in Jerusalem. Generations came and went, but they remained under foreign rule—serving the nations instead of serving the LORD.

In this post-exile setting, another voice continues Isaiah's ministry. We don't know his name. Some call him "third Isaiah" (since a "second Isaiah" gave us Isaiah 40–54). It may be better to think of these sections as the word of the LORD to the community rather than to individuals.

The main themes in this third section of Isaiah are:

- a) the call to serve the LORD, to comply with the Sinai covenant that defined them as his nation.
- b) the promise that God would restore his nation as his partner reflecting his glory, and that God would sort out the nations so they also recognize the LORD.

### 6.1 Life under God's reign (Isaiah 56–59)

#### ***Justice (Isaiah 56–57)***

Justice is the indicator that God's community is living under his leadership:

#### **Isaiah 56:1 (NIV)**

<sup>1</sup> This is what the LORD says:

“Maintain **justice** and do what is right,  
for my **salvation** is close at hand  
and my **righteousness** will soon be revealed.”

*Righteousness* is God doing right by his people, out of faithfulness to them.

*Salvation* is God rescuing his people from oppression, restoring them to his reign.

*Justice* is a community doing what is right, because they trust God to set them right.

These are keywords in the new covenant too, though the relationship starts with God: we *do right* in response to God *justifying* us by *faith*, since Christ is the expression of God-doing-right by the world because of his faithfulness (Romans 3:21-26).

In Isaiah's context, complying with the covenant meant observing the *Sabbaths* (56:2, 4, 6). But this focus on the Sinai covenant law does not exclude foreigners:

### Isaiah 56:6-8 (NIV)

<sup>6</sup> And **foreigners** who bind themselves to the LORD to minister to him, to love the name of the LORD, and to be his servants, all who keep the Sabbath without desecrating it and who hold fast to my covenant—  
<sup>7</sup> these I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house will be called **a house of prayer for all nations.**  
<sup>8</sup> The Sovereign LORD declares—he who **gathers the exiles of Israel**:  
“I will gather still others to them besides those already gathered.”

Can you think of an Old Testament example of *foreigners binding themselves to the LORD*? (Hint: Ruth 1:16). In this vision the foreigners *bring sacrifices* and *keep the Sabbath* because the context is the Sinai covenant. But the image of the foreigners honouring God and being accepted by God was a radical turnaround from what they were experiencing: they had been crushed by the nations who cared nothing for what God said about Israel being his people.

Jewish apocalyptic literature like Enoch wrestled with how God would bring the nations down in order to raise his people up. Isaiah suggests a different solution. Instead of praying for the downfall of the nations, God asks his suffering people to **pray for their tormentors**: *my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations*. Jesus insisted this approach—rather than violence—would save his people (Mark 11:17).



The wicked have always relied on violence to get justice, instead of calling on the name of the LORD (Genesis 4:22-23, 26). But violence only perpetuates violence; it never delivers peace: “*There is no peace, says my God, for the wicked*” (57:21).

### Fasting (Isaiah 58)

What is fasting all about? The Gospels discuss fasting, and Acts mentions it twice. But there's nothing on fasting in the New Testament letters (except when Paul had nothing to eat: 2 Corinthians 6:5 and 11:27). Is fasting a spiritual discipline we should practice today? Why fast?

There's nothing on fasting in the Torah: lots about feasts, nothing about fasts. People practiced fasting when things were wrong (e.g. 2 Samuel 21:9; 2 Chronicles 20:3). When Babylon took the people into exile, they could not practice the feasts, so they fasted on those special days. When they came back from exile and rebuilt the temple, they asked if they should continue these annual fasts. Zechariah questioned what they were fasting for, now they had God among them again (Zechariah 7:3-4). He said their annual fasts should become feasts where they celebrate the LORD (8:19).

But those who were still in exile continued to fast (Esther 4:3; 9:31). The Pharisees called everyone to fast weekly, pleading for God to renew them as his kingdom.

Isaiah had promised a Branch from David's line to reign over them again, but God had not restored the kingdom. They fasted, but God had not answered their pleas:

**Isaiah 58:3-9 (NIV)**

- <sup>3</sup> 'Why have we fasted,' they say, 'and you have not seen it?  
Why have we humbled ourselves, and you have not noticed?'  
Yet on the day of your fasting, you do as you please  
and exploit all your workers.
- <sup>4</sup> Your fasting ends in quarrelling and strife,  
and in striking each other with wicked fists. ...
- <sup>5</sup> Is that what you call a fast, a day acceptable to the LORD?
- <sup>6</sup> Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen:  
to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke,  
to set the oppressed free and break every yoke?
- <sup>7</sup> Is it not to share your food with the hungry  
and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter ...
- <sup>9</sup> Then you will call, and the LORD will answer;  
you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I.

Going without food doesn't impress God. Going without imposing our will on others is more meaningful. To use the money we saved by not eating to help someone else is closer to the heart of justice God desires.

Ironically, the focus on our own personal spiritual disciplines that characterizes religious life in general (not just Christianity) is not what God wants. What do you think?



**God's arm and armour (Isaiah 59)**

**Isaiah 59:1-3 (NIV)**

- <sup>1</sup> Surely the **arm** of the LORD is not too short to save,  
nor his ear too dull to hear.
- <sup>2</sup> But your iniquities have separated you from your God;  
your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.
- <sup>3</sup> For your hands are stained with blood, your fingers with guilt.  
Your lips have spoken falsely, and your tongue mutters wicked things.

I've heard evangelists quoting verse 2 to say that every person is a sinner separated from God for eternity unless you respond to their invitation to accept Jesus as your personal saviour who bridges the divide between God and sinners. Is that what Isaiah 59:2 is saying?

The context is prayer. They accused God of ignoring them when they fasted (58:3), and they're treating God as either unable to save his people (*his arm is too short*) or not wanting to hear their cries (*his ear is too dull*). But lifting blood-stained hands to God in prayer will not succeed. Requests from lying lips cannot be trusted (verse 3). God is looking for *holy hands without anger or disputing* (1 Timothy 2:8). That's what verse 2 is about.

Dishonesty and injustice don't impress God. Yet, God will act to save his people:

**Isaiah 59:15-17 (NIV)**

<sup>15</sup> **Truth** is nowhere to be found,  
and whoever shuns evil becomes a prey.  
The LORD looked and was displeased that there was no justice.  
<sup>16</sup> He saw that there was no one,  
he was appalled that **there was no one** to intervene;  
so his own **arm** achieved **salvation** for him,  
and his own righteousness sustained him.  
<sup>17</sup> He put on **righteousness** as his **breastplate**,  
and the **helmet of salvation** on his head;  
he put on the garments of vengeance  
and wrapped himself in zeal as in a cloak.

Astounding! They are *untrue*, yet their unfaithfulness does not nullify God's faithfulness (Romans 3:3-4). He remains faithful to the covenant, so he does right by them: *his own righteousness sustains him*, so *his own arm achieves salvation* (v. 16). Since they could not save themselves, God donned his armour to fight for their release.

This is *the armour of God* Paul refers to in Ephesians 6:13-17. When did God do this? When did God put on *his breastplate of righteousness* and his *helmet of salvation*, with *his own arm achieving salvation* because he remained *true*?

We've already seen how *the arm of the LORD* (his strength) was revealed in Jesus. The arm of the Lord came into conflict with the kingdoms and rulers of this world when Jesus was handed over to *the palace of the Roman governor* (John 18:28).

The king of the Jews seemed to have no army or amour for this confrontation. Yet here he stood, in a life-and-death confrontation with Pontius Pilate, the representative in Jerusalem of the Caesar who claimed to rule the world, including God's people:

**John 18:33–38 (NIV)**

<sup>33</sup> Pilate ... summoned Jesus and asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?"  
<sup>34</sup> "Is that your own idea," Jesus asked, "or did others talk to you about me?"  
<sup>35</sup> "Am I a Jew?" Pilate replied. "Your own people and chief priests handed you over to me. What is it you have done?"  
<sup>36</sup> Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place."

<sup>37</sup> “You are a king, then!” said Pilate.

Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.”

<sup>38</sup> “What is truth?” retorted Pilate. With this he went out again to the Jews gathered there and said, “I find no basis for a charge against him.”

*Truth* is the foundational issue, just as the truth of who the Hebrews belonged to was the foundational issue in the confrontation with Pharaoh in Exodus. That truth was the foundational armour Jesus relied on as he declared his kingship came from another place (not from Rome). This belt of truth is the foundational piece of God's armour, holding it all together (Ephesians 6:14).

Truth stands on its own merit, but that's not something Pilate understood. For him, the truth was all about who had the weapons to crush their opponents:

**John 19:10-16 (NIV)**

<sup>10</sup> “Do you refuse to speak to me?” Pilate said. “Don't you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?”

<sup>11</sup> Jesus answered, “You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above. Therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin.”

<sup>12</sup> From then on, Pilate tried to set Jesus free, but the Jewish leaders kept shouting, “If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar.”

<sup>13</sup> When Pilate heard this, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judge's seat at a place known as the Stone Pavement ...

<sup>14</sup> “Here is your king,” Pilate said to the Jews.

<sup>15</sup> But they shouted, “Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!”  
“Shall I crucify your king?” Pilate asked.

“We have no king but Caesar,” the chief priests answered.

<sup>16</sup> Finally Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified.  
So the soldiers took charge of Jesus.

Tragically, God's own people betrayed the king God had sent them, so he died at the hands of those who use violence to assert their authority (the soldiers of the Roman Empire). If the rule of the world depends on force, God loses because that's not how God uses his power (flexes *his arm*).

A higher court than Rome's overturned the injustice that is rule-by-force. On the third day, the eternal Father overturned the condemnation and execution of his Son. God's Holy Breath entered into the Messiah's dead body, raising him from has-been to always-will-be. This descendant of David was raised up by the Spirit of holiness and *appointed as 'Son of God in power' by his resurrection from the dead* (Romans 1:4).

The Spirit gave his testimony about Jesus by overturning the dominion of sin and death in the world, *“proving the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgement ... so the prince of this world now stands condemned”* (John 16:8).

That's how God overturned the *truth* that relied on force for justice. That's how *his own arm achieved salvation for him*. That's what it looked like when God *put on righteousness as his breastplate, and the helmet of salvation on his head*. That's what it looked like when *the redeemer came to Zion* (Isaiah 59:15-20).

How does that sit with you?

.....

.....

.....

## 6.2 Life in the Messiah's reign (Isaiah 60–66)

### ***The restored city of God (Isaiah 60-61)***

Under the Messiah's leadership, the people of God will be a new Jerusalem, a place where the nations can see the brilliance of the LORD'S sovereign reign in his people:

#### **Isaiah 60:1-3 (NIV)**

- <sup>1</sup> “Arise, shine, for your light has come,  
and the glory of the LORD rises upon you.
- <sup>2</sup> See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples,  
but the LORD rises upon you and his glory appears over you.
- <sup>3</sup> Nations will come to your light,  
and kings to the brightness of your dawn.

This is life as it was meant to be, life in the reign of God's Anointed (Messiah/Christ):

#### **Isaiah 61:1-4 (NIV)**

- <sup>1</sup> The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me,  
because the LORD has anointed me  
to proclaim good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,  
to proclaim freedom for the captives  
and release from darkness for the prisoners,
- <sup>2</sup> to proclaim the year of the LORD's favour  
and the day of vengeance of our God,  
to comfort all who mourn,
- <sup>3</sup> and provide for those who grieve in Zion ...

Magnificent promises of the capital under the Messiah's reign keep coming:

### **Isaiah 62 (NIV)**

- <sup>1</sup> For Zion's sake I will not keep silent,  
for Jerusalem's sake I will not remain quiet,  
till her vindication shines out like the dawn,  
her salvation like a blazing torch.
- <sup>2</sup> The nations will see your vindication, and all kings your glory; you  
will be called by a new name that the mouth of the LORD will bestow.
- <sup>3</sup> You will be a crown of splendour in the LORD's hand,  
a royal diadem in the hand of your God. ...
- <sup>10</sup> Pass through, pass through the gates!  
Prepare the way for the people.  
Build up, build up the highway! Remove the stones.  
Raise a banner for the nations.
- <sup>11</sup> The LORD has made proclamation to the ends of the earth:  
“Say to Daughter Zion, ‘See, your Savior comes!  
See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him.’”
- <sup>12</sup> They will be called the Holy People, the Redeemed of the LORD;  
and you will be called Sought After, the City No Longer Deserted.

But then we're reminded of the bloodshed he endured to establish this city.

### ***The Messiah as victor (Isaiah 63)***

In the list of David's victories over his enemies, Edom is near the end, a symbol that *the LORD gave David victory wherever he went* (2 Samuel 8:14). So who is this?

#### **Isaiah 63:1-5 (NIV)**

- <sup>1</sup> Who is this coming from Edom,  
from Bozrah, with his garments stained crimson?  
Who is this, robed in splendour,  
striding forward in the greatness of his strength?  
“It is I, proclaiming victory, mighty to save.”
- <sup>2</sup> Why are your garments red, like those of one treading the winepress?
- <sup>3</sup> “I have trodden the winepress alone;  
from the nations no one was with me.  
I trampled them in my anger and trod them down in my wrath;  
their blood spattered my garments, and I stained all my clothing.
- <sup>4</sup> It was for me the day of vengeance;  
the year for me to redeem had come.
- <sup>5</sup> I looked, but there was no one to help,  
I was appalled that no one gave support;  
so my own arm achieved salvation for me,  
and my own wrath sustained me.”

This warrior has returned after the battle, like a king with blood-stained garments. He has dealt with the false claims of ownership over God's people. On his own he has redeemed God's people when not one of them stood with him. *The arm of the LORD* was here in the Messiah, achieving salvation for us all.

### ***Praying for divine visitation (Isaiah 64)***

So here is their prayer for God to step in and set things right:

#### **Isaiah 64:1-4 (NIV)**

- <sup>1</sup> Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down,  
that the mountains would tremble before you!
- <sup>2</sup> As when fire sets twigs ablaze and causes water to boil,  
come down to make your name known to your enemies  
and cause the nations to quake before you!
- <sup>3</sup> For when you did awesome things that we did not expect,  
you came down, and the mountains trembled before you.
- <sup>4</sup> Since ancient times no one has heard, no ear has perceived,  
no eye has seen any God besides you,  
who acts on behalf of those who wait for him.

What would it look like for God to *rend the heavens and come down*? Maybe they expected something like Mount Sinai when God came down to establish them as his people, when *the whole mountain trembled violently* (Exodus 19:18).

God answered this prayer in a way they did not expect (1 Corinthians 2:9). *The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us* (John 1:14), *the one who came from heaven* (John 3:13, 31; 6:38).

### ***New heavens and new earth (Isaiah 65)***

God would reveal himself not just to Israel but to the nations as well:

#### **Isaiah 65:1-2 (NIV)**

- <sup>1</sup> “I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me;  
I was found by those who did not seek me.  
To a nation that did not call on my name,  
I said, ‘Here am I, here am I.’
- <sup>2</sup> All day long I have held out my hands to an obstinate people,  
who walk in ways not good, pursuing their own imaginations.

Astoundingly, the nations would hear the good news, trust the Messiah, and be grafted into God's people. Tragically, those who had been God's people through the centuries of the kingdom and the exile would turn away from the God who literally held out his hands to them in the Messiah. That's how the New Testament understands this text (Romans 10:20-21 in context).



By including the nations in the Messiah's redeeming work, God restores the whole creation to be what he intended in the beginning:

**Isaiah 65:17-25 (NIV)**

<sup>17</sup> “See, I will create new heavens and a new earth.

The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.

<sup>18</sup> But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create,

for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy.

<sup>19</sup> I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people;

the sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more.

That's the effect of the Messiah's saving work. The whole creation has been groaning like a woman in labour, yearning to give birth to what God always intended. In Christ, *the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God* (Romans 8:21-22).



Jerusalem was significant as capital of the kingdom of God in Old Testament times.

There they provided a house for their heavenly sovereign, the ark where he sat enthroned. But even as they built the temple they knew it could not contain God:

*“Will God really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain you”* (1 Kings 8:27). The fringe of his robe was all Isaiah saw as the LORD of hosts towered above his temple.

**All creation restored (Isaiah 66)**

If the nations recognize God's Messiah, the whole earth becomes God's kingdom and creation itself becomes a temple for the heavenly Sovereign:

**Isaiah 66:1-2 (NIV)**

<sup>1</sup> This is what the LORD says:

“Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool.

Where is the house you will build for me?

Where will my resting place be?

<sup>2</sup> Has not my hand made all these things, and so they came into being?” declares the LORD.

It's as the LORD's anointed declared in Psalm 24:1: *The earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.*

**Isaiah 66:18-24 (NIV)**

<sup>18</sup> “And I, because of what they have planned and done, am about to come and gather the people of all nations and languages, and they will come and see my glory.

<sup>19</sup> “I will set a sign among them, and I will send some of those who survive to the nations—to Tarshish, to the Libyans and Lydians (famous as archers), to Tubal and Greece, and to the distant islands that have not heard of my fame or seen my glory. They will proclaim my glory among the nations. <sup>20</sup> And they will bring all your people, from all the nations, to my holy mountain in Jerusalem as an offering to the LORD—on horses, in chariots and wagons, and on mules and camels,” says the LORD. “They will bring them, as the Israelites bring their grain offerings, to the temple of the LORD in ceremonially clean vessels. <sup>21</sup> And I will select some of them also to be priests and Levites,” says the LORD.

<sup>22</sup> “As the new heavens and the new earth that I make will endure before me,” declares the LORD, “so will your name and descendants endure.

<sup>23</sup> From one New Moon to another and from one Sabbath to another, all mankind will come and bow down before me,” says the LORD. <sup>24</sup> “And they will go out and look on the dead bodies of those who rebelled against me; the worms that eat them will not die, the fire that burns them will not be quenched, and they will be loathsome to all mankind.”

The prophet has received such an expansive vision of heaven and earth being reunited in the Son of David who restores heaven's reign to the whole earth. Yet the only lens he has for approaching God is the Jerusalem temple and the Sinai covenant.

From a New Testament perspective, *the prophets ... searched intently and with the greatest care ... when they spoke of things have not been told to you by those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven* (1 Peter 1:10-11).

But when God fulfilled these promises in Christ, he established a new covenant with all mankind, a new Jerusalem that covers the whole world rather than a hilltop in old Jerusalem. The whole earth is now God's holy land.

The whole world is redeemed, but that does not mean every individual is rescued. Some persist in their rebellion against the heavenly sovereign. They are not made part of the new creation against their will. They die. Their bodies are eaten by worms or burned with the rubbish that does not make it into the redeemed world.

Jesus used these phrases when he spoke of *Gehenna*. Usually translated “hell,” it was a literal place just south of Jerusalem where bodies were burnt. Jeremiah called it *the valley of slaughter* because so many died there when Babylon invaded (Jeremiah 7:32-34; 19:3-13). In calling people to follow his leadership, Jesus incorporated this horror language from Jeremiah and the ending of Isaiah (e.g. Mark 9:48).

## 6.3 Conclusion

What do you believe about God's plans for the earth? What does "a new heavens and a new earth" mean for you as we live in a world that's not yet fully restored? How does that shape the way we live now?

.....

.....

Thinking back over the Book of Isaiah, what are the key messages that have stood out to you? In what ways does this book help shape your understanding of Christ?

.....

.....

There's so much in Isaiah. It begins eight centuries before Jesus, in the time of the divided kingdom before Israel fell to Assyria and Judah fell to Babylon.

### *Week 1:*

Isaiah confronted Judah, calling them to turn back to the LORD (Isaiah 1). He planned to make Jerusalem the place where the nations would discover God (Isaiah 2).

With a vision of God's throne, Isaiah was called as God's spokesman, delivering his instruction to a people who reject the LORD'S leading at their own peril (Isaiah 6).

"Immanuel! God is with us," Isaiah proclaimed to a king who saw himself as in control (7:14).

To a kingdom that had fallen to Assyria, Isaiah proclaimed the birth of the royal Son (9:1-7).

To a kingdom that died when David's family tree fell, Isaiah proclaimed the Branch from the root of David, the anointed king who brings peace to the world (Isaiah 11).

### *Week 2:*

To the king of Babylon who raised his throne above God's, Isaiah proclaimed his humiliation (14:4-18).

To the nations that had oppressed God's people (Assyria and Egypt), Isaiah proclaimed the LORD would include them in his reign (19:19-25).

To Jerusalem, Isaiah proclaimed a change of government for a people who resisted God's authority (Isaiah 22), and a world devastated by disobedience (Isaiah 24).

### *Week 3:*

Joyful praise accompanies the LORD'S reign as he delivers his people from the reign of death (Isaiah 26–27). But this restoration requires faith: the LORD'S people trusting in him, rather than their own strength or the power of other rulers (Isaiah 31–35).

That's how it worked out in practice. Through faith, Hezekiah saved Jerusalem from Assyria, though he later trusted the king of Babylon (Isaiah 36–39).

**Week 4:**

To the exiles in Babylon, another voice announced the *gospel*, the good news of the restoration of God's reign (40:1-11). The LORD would restore his fallen servant (Isaiah 41–43), through the Persian King Cyrus (Isaiah 44–45) who would humiliate Babylon (Isaiah 46–47).

**Week 5:**

The servant of the LORD would do for God's people what they could not do for themselves (Isaiah 48–52), shouldering their affliction for them as he suffered and died for them (Isaiah 53), extending God's reign to the world (Isaiah 54–55).

**Week 6:**

The concluding voice in Isaiah calls God's people to live justly as the expression of God's reign (Isaiah 56–58), promising the LORD himself would rescue them (Isaiah 59), restoring them as his brilliant beacon to the nations (Isaiah 60–62).

The son of David wins that victory for his people (Isaiah 63–64), resolving every injustice, restoring heaven and earth under the LORD's leadership (Isaiah 65–66).

Any further thoughts on Isaiah? Which New Testament quotations help you understand how the word of the LORD through Isaiah are fulfilled in Christ?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

If you need to see what others have written so you can write your own summary, Barry Webb puts it like this:

The vision of Isaiah contains many impressive elements. First Assyria looms large, and then Babylon, and many other nations and persons vie for our attention as well. But what the superscription effectively does is to drape a banner from one particular window. It tells us to keep our eye firmly fixed on Judah and Jerusalem, and as we do so, a figure appears before our eyes. He has royal titles which link him in the most intimate way with God himself (9:6). He is a shoot from the stump of Jesse, an

ideal king from the line of David (11:1). He is endowed with the Spirit and rules with perfect justice, and under him all that God has purposed for his people and his world is fully realized (11:2–9). The term 'messiah' properly belongs to every king of the house of David, even the unworthy ones; each, by virtue of his office, is 'the LORD's messiah'. But this is *the* Messiah, the final and perfect one, and on reflection we can see how fittingly the window frames him and anticipates his appearance. For 'Judah' and 'Jerusalem' both have the strongest possible links in the Old Testament with the house of David.

But then, as we watch, he is strangely altered, or more correctly he appears again in a different guise. It is so different, in fact, that at first we have difficulty recognizing him as the same person. He is a humble and gentle servant (42:1–3), he meets discouragement and opposition (49:4), he is cruelly persecuted and killed (50:6; 53:8–9), but at last he is raised and glorified, and all God's purposes prosper in his hand (53:10). And then at last it becomes clear: the two figures are one. For the Servant, too, is a royal figure. He brings forth justice to the nations (42:1), the distant lands wait for his law (42:4), and through him the blessings promised to David are at last fully realized (55:3–5).

At the heart of Isaiah's vision is the startling revelation that the Messiah must suffer. Its sharpest focus is on the one who came to the window for us all. That is, if you like, the depth of it, the truth that lies at the centre. But like a well-cut diamond, the vision has surface as well as depth, and we will be able to appreciate its many facets only as we attend carefully to the way it has been shaped and presented to us as Holy Scripture.<sup>17</sup>

Michael Bird (a fellow Aussie) describes God's promises to restore his kingdom:

It is a domain of power, authority, kingship; benefaction and blessing; economic and political liberation; the present and future; justice and judgment; people and place. It is transcendent yet immanent; something supernatural though terrestrial; capable of abstraction in parables and yet brutally confronting when its demands are laid upon individuals.

Jesus appears to have been shaped principally by Isaiah, Daniel and Zechariah in his discourse about God's kingdom. ...

Jesus' message of the kingdom was an appropriation of Israel's sacred traditions even while it challenged and undermined competing notions of God's kingship vis-à-vis Israel and the world. ...

The overwhelming impression that Jesus created was that the 'kingdom' was God's present reign ahead of its expression in a future realm ...

---

<sup>17</sup> Barry Webb, *The Message of Isaiah: On Eagles' Wings*, Bible Speaks Today (Inter-Varsity Press, 1996), 29.

where there would be the life, renewal, blessings and justice that the prophets had announced ... a hybrid of God's forthcoming dominion-domain-deliverance. ...

To be close to Jesus is to be close to the kingdom. ... Jesus is the 'strong man' who raids the demons' kingdom and establishes his own. Jesus is also the Son of Man around whom the disciples will gather as the leaders in charge of a restored Israelite monarchy which the Father will confer on Jesus. Those who witness Jesus' deeds and hear his words are 'blessed' because they see what many prophets and kings of Israel's sacred history longed for but did not experience, namely, the fulfilment of God's promises to reveal his kingly power precisely in Jesus. It is one's response to Jesus that determines entrance to the kingdom.

When it comes to the kingdom, Jesus was no onlooker and no forerunner. To the contrary, he believed that he was at the centre of it as its chief agent. This is why, presumably, the early church correlated Jesus and the kingdom, yielding expressions such as 'the kingdom of God and the name/teaching of Jesus', 'the kingdom of the son of his love' and the 'kingdom of Christ', believing that '[Jesus] must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet', destroying 'every ruler and every authority and power', and that 'then comes the end, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father'. One day, the church would declare: 'The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign for ever and ever.' God's kingdom entails the reign of Jesus!<sup>18</sup>

Ben Witherington and others see Isaiah's impact everywhere in the New Testament:

*Isaiah said this because he saw Jesus's glory and spoke about him.* —John 12:41

Almost everywhere one turns in the NT, one finds the fingerprints of Isaiah. In some 300 pages of most any translation of the NT, there are over 400 quotes, paraphrases, or allusions to Isaiah. That's more than one per page on even a conservative estimate. More strikingly, precisely in regard to the subjects that we find most central and crucial to the NT, having to do with Christology, eschatology, and soteriology, Isaiah is drawn on again and again to articulate the good news. There is a good reason why John F. A. Sawyer entitled his book *The Fifth Gospel: Isaiah in the History of Christianity*.<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup> Michael F. Bird, *Whispers of Revolution: Jesus and the Coming of God as King* (Apollos, 2025), 49–50.

<sup>19</sup> Ben Witherington III, *Isaiah Old and New: Exegesis, Intertextuality, and Hermeneutics* (Fortress Press, 2017), 13.