

Children of the Promise

Studies in Isaiah, Galatians, and Ephesians

Teacher Handbook

CHRISTIAN LIGHT SUNDAY SCHOOL CURRICULUM

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Vol. 60

December 2026, January, February 2027

No. 2

Suggested Hymns

Lesson 1

Holy, Holy, Holy
Lord, I Am Fondly, Earnestly Longing
Though Your Sins Be As Scarlet
Thou to Whom the Sick and Dying

Lesson 2

Onward March, All-Conquering Jesus
Crown Him With Many Crowns
Hail to the Brightness
Peace, Perfect Peace

Lesson 3

Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus
Veiled in Darkness Judah Lay
What Child Is This?
To Us a Child of Hope Is Born

Lesson 4

Joy to the World
Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming
Come, Ye Disconsolate
More Holiness Give Me

Lesson 5

The Love of God
Wounded for Me
Christ's Everlasting Gospel
Joy to the World

Lesson 6

Standing on the Promises
Faith Is a Living Power From Heaven
Complete in Thee
I Will Sing of My Redeemer

Lesson 7

Praise Ye Jehovah
Great God, Indulge My Humble Claim
Who Can Fathom the Wonder
O for a Heart to Praise My God

Lesson 8

Love Divine, All Loves Excelling
Drawn to the Cross
There's a Royal Banner
Where Cross the Crowded Ways
of Life

Lesson 9

To God Be the Glory
God Loved the World So That He Gave
Blessed Assurance, Jesus Is Mine
Under His Wings

Lesson 10

Great God of Wonders
In Christ There Is No East or West
Father Eternal, Ruler of Creation
The Church's One Foundation

Lesson 11

See the Conqueror Mounts in Triumph
O Thou Who Makest Souls to Shine
The Master Has Come
Kind Words Can Never Die

Lesson 12

Ere the Blue Heavens Were Stretched
Abroad
Together We Seek Thee
Heart With Loving Heart United
Jesus, From Whom All Blessings Flow

Lesson 13

A Mighty Fortress Is Our God
Conquering Now and Still to Conquer
Soldiers of Christ, Arise
Service Is Our Watchword

Alternate Memory Passage

December 2026, January, February 2027

The following Scripture is for classes that would like to memorize a passage instead of individual verses this quarter. (The superintendent could be in charge of the memory work, if all the youth and adult classes wish to memorize it together.) We suggest that students memorize and repeat together one verse each Sunday, adding to the verses memorized the previous Sundays.

Ephesians 5:8–20

- 8** For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light:
- 9** (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;)
- 10** Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.
- 11** And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.
- 12** For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret.
- 13** But all things that are reproved are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light.
- 14** Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.
- 15** See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,
- 16** Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.
- 17** Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.
- 18** And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;
- 19** Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;
- 20** Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Using the Teacher Handbook

This handbook is designed to help Sunday school teachers prepare for and teach the lessons in Christian Light's Adult/Youth quarterlies. It is not meant to give you a complete outline and teaching notes for your class or to teach the lesson for you. Nor will it replace your taking the time to study the lesson text and seek God's help in preparing to teach.

There is more material in the handbook than can be covered in a single Sunday school period. We do not intend that it all be used, but rather that it helps you prepare to teach and to meet the needs in your class.

Following is a list of the main sections in each quarterly, along with a brief description of it and its purpose.

Quarter and Unit Introductions

Every quarterly includes an introductory overview of its content. Some quarterlies will also include unit introductions when there is a shift to a different book or topic. These will provide an overview of the Scripture or topic and are meant for both teachers and students to read outside of class to help them prepare for the upcoming lessons.

Scripture Text

The core of every lesson is the Scripture text. Properly preparing to teach will require you to spend most of your study time focusing on the text itself. We have included brief definitions for less familiar words and phrases below the Scripture text. These can function as a basic lexicon. Definitions will sometimes include references where the word is used in another context.

A Scripture passage should not be studied in isolation from the rest of Scripture. The Related Scriptures section adds context to the text by providing references to parallel accounts, fulfilled prophecies, or additional teaching on an idea or concept in the lesson.

While we try to include complete Scripture passages, we are sometimes unable to due to space constraints. You will benefit from reading the intervening or surrounding verses.

Lesson Commentary

The commentary on the lesson text gives a brief overview of the context, main ideas, and interpretive issues in the text. It also strives to offer a Biblical, Christ-centered, and faithful interpretation of the text that points toward obedient application. The guiding purpose of the commentary is to help both students and teachers navigate some of the more difficult or confusing portions of Scripture to allow them to more clearly see God's work in mankind and His plan for redemption through Christ's death, resurrection, and return.

Study Questions

These questions follow the basic outline of inductive Bible study: observation, interpretation, and application. *Observation* questions ask what, when, or where,

and deal with sequence, context, and key details. *Interpretation* questions ask why or how and invite students to interpret the text. *Application* questions ask how the text should change or affect one's life.

Ponder these questions before class. Develop other worthwhile questions. *All questions are for all ages, yet the youth questions are especially for the youth.*

Lesson Setting

The Lesson Setting section gives information that can help you better understand or interpret the Scripture text. The Persons of Note section offers a snapshot of people in the text and may include name meanings, pronunciations, approximate dates, or interesting facts from historians.

Bible writers and characters lived in very different cultures than we do. Knowing about ancient events, geography, language, and literature can deepen your appreciation of Biblical accounts. The Context section offers a window into their world.

Studying the Lesson

This section includes tips for class preparation. Key words, events, or ideas are suggested for further study. Use the suggestions and prompts to help you know where to start studying and which areas deserve further study. Consider working through the outline, checking off each study suggestion as you go.

Always keep the Biblical text at the forefront of your study and let it speak to you directly. This is why cross-references are one of the most valuable study tools in your Bible study tool kit: they direct you to interpret Scripture according to Scripture. Commentaries, Bible dictionaries, and lexicons have their place in studying Scripture, but keep in mind that they are not divinely inspired. Never let man's words drown out or alter God's Word.

Teaching the Lesson

This section suggests an outline for teaching each lesson. Decide in advance which points to emphasize and limit the time for each section to help your class get through the whole text. Because of the amount of material, you may need to omit some of it, especially if your class loves discussion. Guide your class's discussion away from speculation and debate and focus on the essential points of the passage to ensure these are not ignored or lost.

Practical Applications

In this section, find principles from the lesson text that can be applied to everyday life. Encourage your class to live out their faith.

Help for the Superintendent

The superintendent will find a suggested Scripture here along with a short commentary to encourage his study and thoughts. These passages have been chosen to complement the main lesson text.

Children of the Promise

Studies in Isaiah, Galatians, and Ephesians

Heirs of Abraham

The Bible contains sixty-six unique books, penned by more than forty authors over a thousand years. In dungeon, palace, and wilderness, faithful men penned the very words of God. Kings, physicians, herdsman, prophets, tax collectors, fishermen, scholars, musicians, and priests wrote Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek, and recorded events from Asia, Africa, and Europe. Like the unique stones of a beautiful mosaic, the sixty-six books of the Bible together portray the loving plan of God for us through Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ is the message of the three books in this study. The Book of Isaiah anticipates Christ's coming and reign; Galatians shouts His saving grace and new creation; Ephesians sings the glory of His loving will and the splendor of His bride.

Compared to Isaiah, many Old Testament books seem less clearly connected to Jesus. God's dealings with Israel often dominate the Old Testament accounts. God chose and preserved Israel to be a blessing to all nations, a promise fulfilled through Jesus, the promised Messiah (Gen. 12:1-3; Isa. 42:6; Gal. 3:7-9, 14).

Paul says that all who believe in Jesus, both Jew and Gentile, become "children of the promise" (Galatians 4:28) and true children of Abraham (Gal. 3:16, 26-29). In Christ, God's promise to bless all nations through Abraham begins to find its glorious fulfillment. "My covenant is with thee," God told Abraham, "and thou shalt be a father of many nations" (Genesis 17:4; see also Rom. 4:16-24). Multitudes from every tribe, language, people, and nation are being gathered into God's family through faith. After showing Abraham the stars of heaven, God had told him, "So shall thy seed be" (Genesis 15:4-6). Are these the ones "which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues" that stand in white robes before the throne of the Lamb (Rev. 7:9)?

To the Jews were given great advantages, for they received the very words of God, the covenants, and the promises (Rom. 3:1, 2). God loves them on account of their fathers (Rom. 11:28). We must also love them with a love that shares the Gospel and desires their salvation. Paul is clear that only those obedient to the Gospel will be saved, Jew or Gentile (Rom. 1:16; 10:11-13). But he also reminds Gentile believers of their great privilege of being grafted in among God's people and warns them not to be high-minded, but fear (Rom. 11:20).

The Old Testament indicated that an Israelite would be blessed by God if he shared Abraham's obedience, not just his bloodline (Isa. 1:10-20; Ezek. 33:23-26). Paul writes, "They are not all Israel, which are of Israel: neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children . . . of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed" (Romans 9:6-8). Only those faithful to God are children of God.

In Galatians 4, Paul draws a startling parallel between Hagar's children and the Jews who reject Jesus. Abraham fathered Ishmael with Sarah's slave Hagar, but Ishmael had no right to the Abrahamic promise, despite being Abraham's son after the flesh (Gal. 4:30). Paul uses this account to illustrate the difference between human effort and faith in God's promise (Gal. 4:21-31), emphasizing that God's inheritance

belongs to those who trust His promise fulfilled in Christ.

Like Paul, we grieve that many of his fellow Jews did not recognize Jesus as the promised Messiah (Rom. 9:1-5), although Isaiah announced it long ago (Isa. 55:3-5). They have rejected the new and better covenant of Jesus and the heavenly Jerusalem (Gal. 4:24-27) and have cut themselves off from the “in Christ” fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham. Yet Paul also is confident that God has not cast Israel away and looks forward in hope to His continuing work among them (Rom. 11:1-19). Our calling is to proclaim Christ in humility and love to Jew and Gentile alike.

Real Righteousness

Not only do believers share Abraham’s promises; they also obtain righteousness as he did—by faith (Gal. 3:6). The righteousness God seeks can never be obtained by the slavish observance of the Law of Moses, but by a walk of faith (Rom. 1:17; 9:30-33).

God’s purpose for His people has always been righteousness. The Apostle Peter applies God’s command to Israel at Sinai to us in the new covenant: “Be ye holy; for I am holy” (1 Peter 1:16; see also Leviticus 11:44). Nor is this godly righteousness a legal status that excuses sinful behavior. “He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he [God] is righteous” (1 John 3:7).

Some view salvation as something that happens primarily in the law-courts of Heaven, not necessarily within the believer. In this view, Christ’s “alien righteousness” (Christ’s righteousness imputed to a person regardless of his sinful life) is credited to the believer’s account and cancels out their sinfulness. This merely legal view of salvation allows people to ignore their sinful behavior. If Jesus’ external righteousness is all that God requires of us, and Jesus’ righteousness has already been “added to our account,” then why must we strive to be holy?

Teachers of this “forensic salvation” (a legal declaration of salvation regardless of a person’s actual transformation) may *recommend* personal holiness but do not view it as essential. But the Bible plainly tells us that without holiness, we will never see the Lord (Heb. 12:14). It is God’s will that we be sanctified, since unrighteous behavior is a rejection of God Himself (1 Thess. 4:3-8). Every part of our life and body can belong to God and work righteousness (Rom. 12:1-2).

The New Testament describes salvation as a dramatic change wrought within us by the Holy Spirit. God declares us righteous *because* He has made us new in Christ. The former sinful life has passed away (2 Cor. 5:17). God re-creates us to live out His righteousness and to show His holiness to the world (Eph. 4:22-24). God does not simply move Jesus’ righteousness to our column in the heavenly ledger. Rather, He graciously brings about His own righteousness in our person as we die to sin and rise with Christ (Rom. 6:3-14).

Our initial justification and sanctification do not remove the need for ongoing sanctification as we grow into the attitudes and habits of Jesus. We are creatures living in time, and the process of salvation is worked out in time (Phil. 2:12-13).

Isaiah prophesied that “the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations” (Isaiah 61:11). In Jesus, God has made a new and everlasting covenant with the children of promise, “that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD” (Isaiah 61:3). Ultimately, they will inherit a new heaven and a new earth, inhabited by righteousness (2 Pet. 3:13).

Unit 1: Isaiah

Background

Little is known about the Prophet Isaiah, except that he prophesied during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah of Judah (1:1). Those kings reigned before the Babylonian exile from around 740–686 B.C. This suggests that his writings were composed over a period of nearly fifty years. Isaiah’s access to these kings may imply that he had a courtly position or even royal blood.

Isaiah’s literary skill and eloquence suggest he was well-educated. This wide-ranging book includes history (Chapter 36), messianic prophecy (7:13–16), eschatology (65:17–25), and some of the most remarkable poetry of the Hebrew Bible (Chapters 40–55).

Noting the book’s variety, liberal scholars have argued that it must have had multiple authors. The text, however, clearly identifies only one author (1:1; 2:1). Isaiah’s ministry covered nearly fifty years—a writer’s style can change dramatically over such a lengthy time. The text does mention Isaiah’s disciples, and they may have preserved his writings (8:16). The theories of multiple authors only arose after rationalism eroded belief in divine prophecy. Before the late eighteenth century, Christians saw this book as wholly the work of Isaiah.

Message

In Isaiah, metaphors and themes repeat and develop like a short pattern of notes in a great symphony. A central theme of the book is the birth, redemption, and reign of the Messiah, Israel’s ideal King. Isaiah predicts Christ’s mission so vividly that his book has been called a “fifth Gospel.” Many of Matthew’s sixty Old Testament quotations come from Isaiah. New Testament writers quote Isaiah more often than any other Old Testament book except Psalms.

Christian readers of the early centuries interpreted Isaiah in terms of the person and work of Jesus. In this, they followed the lead of the New Testament itself. This Jesus-centered interpretation of Isaiah was a flashpoint between them and unbelieving Jews, who also held Isaiah in high regard.

Sin and righteousness are also major themes in Isaiah. Isaiah refers to God as “the Holy One of Israel” twenty-six times, unifying the book’s three main sections: Chapters 1–39, Chapters 40–55, and Chapters 56–66. Isaiah is transformed through his vision of God’s perfect holiness. He cries out, “Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts” (6:5).

For Isaiah, this required purification. A holy God must have a holy people. How else could they claim Him as their God? Thus, the Holy One of Israel promised to come down and redeem those who turned from their sins (59:1–20). As their Saviour, He would purify the remnant of Israel. Through His atoning death and conquest against

the forces of darkness (53:11; 63:1–6; Col. 2:14–15), God’s righteousness would then be truly realized in His people (61:1–3). Even the Gentiles would be included in this renewed, new-covenant Israel, showing God’s holiness to the world (55:3–5).

Isaiah warned that purification would come through judgment (1:25; 48:9–10). Jerusalem’s morality had plummeted since the days of King David (1:21–23). Death and exile would come upon the nation if she did not turn from her sin (1:19–20). Judgment would be thorough; only a small remnant would be left (1:9).

Despite the theme of judgment, Isaiah offered hope (1:26–27; 45:17). God would not forget Israel in exile (49:14–15). Even invincible Babylon would become less than nothing (47:1), and its idols would be carried off as captives (46:1–2). God would anoint King Cyrus of Persia as His own servant to free Israel from captivity (45:1–4).

Ultimate hope for Israel and other nations was the cleansing and renewal wrought by the suffering Servant (53:4, 5). Sin was Israel’s greatest threat, not her national enemies. Israel’s sin isolated her from God, even though God longed for a relationship with her. Jesus’ sacrifice would provide the perfect solution, not only averting divine judgment, but also removing sin and making His people righteous. His sacrifice would bring genuine “at-one-ment” between God and man (53:5–6; 1 John 1:3).

GLIMPSES OF JESUS IN ISAIAH

His Titles	His Mission	His Characteristics
Immanuel, 7:14	Light, 9:2	Wisdom, 11:2
Wonderful, 9:6	Judge, 11:3	Quick Understanding, 11:3
Counsellor, 9:6	Reprover, 11:4	Justice, 11:4
Mighty God, 9:6	Lawgiver, 42:4	Righteousness, 11:5
Everlasting Father, 9:6	Liberator, 42:7	Silence, 42:2
Prince of Peace, 9:6	Burden-bearer, 53:4	Gentleness, 42:3
Righteous King, 32:1	Sin-bearer, 53:6	Perseverance, 42:4
God’s Servant, 42:1	Intercessor, 53:12	Radiance, 42:6
Arm of the LORD, 53:1	Only Saviour, 63:5	Compassion, 53:4
Anointed Preacher, 61:1		Meekness, 53:7
Strong Traveler, 63:1	Historical Facts	Sinlessness, 53:9
	Birth, 7:14	Sin Offering, 53:10
	Family Line, 11:1	Justifying Knowledge, 53:11
	Anointing, 11:2	Greatness, 53:12

Memory Verse

Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.

Isaiah 1:16–17

Lesson Focus

Those who truly belong to God will walk in holiness.

The Requirement of Righteousness

God instructed Israel, “Be holy, for I am holy.” Holiness defined the Mosaic covenant. God required His children to walk in holiness and righteousness. If Israel obeyed God’s voice, of all nations they would be His treasured possession, showing forth the righteousness of the Lord. But Israel failed—again and again. How would God respond to Judah’s disregard to His plea?

God’s Diagnosis

Isaiah 1:1–9

¹The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

²Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the LORD hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. ³The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. ⁴Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a ^aseed of evildoers, children that ^bare corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are ^cgone away backward.

⁵Why should ye be ^dstricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. ⁶From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither ^emollified with ointment.

⁷Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire: Your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate, ^fas overthrown by strangers. ⁸And the daughter of Zion is left as a ^gcottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city.

^aseed (v. 4) – offspring

^bare corrupters (v. 4) – deal corruptly, do wicked things

^cgone away backward (v. 4) – turned their backs on God

^dstricken (v. 5) – beaten, struck down

^emollified (v. 6) – treated, soothed, or softened

^fas overthrown by strangers (v. 7) – ruined as only foreign invaders can do

^gcottage, lodge (v. 8) – an abandoned hut or shelter

⁹Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small ^hremnant, we should have been as ⁱSodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah.

God's Remedy

Isaiah 1:10-20

¹⁰Hear the word of the LORD, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah. ¹¹To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats.

¹²When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? ¹³Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot ^jaway with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting.

¹⁴Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary ^kto bear them. ¹⁵And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.

¹⁶Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; ¹⁷learn to do well; seek ^ljudgment, relieve the oppressed, ^ljudge the fatherless, plead for the widow. ¹⁸Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. ¹⁹If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: ²⁰but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.

Related Scriptures

Deuteronomy 28; 30;
31:9–32:29
Jonah 3:5–10
Isaiah 1; 6; 53:4
Matthew 8:16–17; 22:37–40
Luke 5:17–32
1 Peter 1:14–16; 2:9

^hremnant (v. 9) – a few survivors
ⁱSodom, Gomorrah (v. 9) – wicked cities destroyed by God (Gen. 19:24–25)
^jaway with (v. 13) – endure
^kto bear (v. 14) – of bearing
^ljudgment; judge (v. 17) – justice; take up the cause for

Lesson Commentary

God's Diagnosis

The title “the Holy One of Israel” appears twenty-seven times throughout the Book of Isaiah, but only six times elsewhere in the Old Testament. God’s glory and holiness are central themes in this book.

A holy God must have a holy people. “Ye shall be holy: for I the LORD your God am holy” (Leviticus 19:2). Israel’s calling was covenantal. If she obeyed, she would be God’s prized treasure among the nations, a kingdom of priests (Exod. 19:5–6). Her obedience would display God’s character before the nations. What would have happened had all Israel been willing to see the holiness and glory of God as Isaiah did (Isa. 6)?

Sadly, Israel repeatedly failed. Despite God’s miraculous deliverance from Egypt and His generous provision in the wilderness, they grumbled and provoked Him (Deut. 9:22–26). While Moses received the Ten Commandments, Israel fashioned a golden idol (Deut. 9:11–21). On the plains of Moab, God warned Moses that Israel would turn to other gods after Moses’ death (Deut. 31:16).

By Isaiah’s time, that warning had become reality. In today’s text, the Lord described Judah as rebellious children, a sinful nation (vv. 2–6). Where He expected justice, He found bloodshed; where He looked for righteousness, He heard cries of distress (Isa. 5:7). So great was Judah’s wickedness that God compared her to Sodom and Gomorrah (v. 10; Deut. 32:32).

Tragically, Israel did not realize their condition. Creation responds to its Maker, but Israel did not (v. 3). They despised His patient pleading, provoking Him and becoming His enemies (Isa. 24).

God had claimed Israel as His son (Exod. 4:22). Throughout Isaiah, God pleads with Judah like a father pleads with his wayward son (v. 2). Throughout Scripture, God presents Himself as a caring Father who formed His people and longs for their love (Isa. 64:8; Mal. 2:10; 1 John 3:1).

God is a Father, but He is also a Judge. This chapter follows the pattern of an ancient lawsuit. God summons heaven and earth as witnesses, just as Moses did when setting blessings and curses before Israel (Deut. 4:26; 30:19–20; 31:28–29; 32:1). Isaiah makes it clear that Israel chose the curses of disobedience rather than the blessings of righteousness.

Judah was too proud to realize how gravely ill she was (v. 5). The ailments described in verse 6 are powerful metaphors for sin. Sin wounds and damages us and others in many ways (Ps. 38:3–8). Sin festers and grows just like an untreated disease. And like a malignant cancer, sin that is not removed leads to death (James 1:15).

But was Isaiah only speaking of spiritual sickness? God promised to protect Israel from physical sickness if they were faithful to the covenant, but promised deadly diseases if they were not (Exod. 23:25; Deut. 7:15; 28:21–22, 27). Wicked Israel would surely experience physical sickness along with their spiritual sickness. Jerusalem, God’s once-faithful city, had become a spiritual harlot (Isa. 1:21–23).

God's Remedy

About a century after Isaiah, Jeremiah asked, “Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there?” (Jeremiah 8:22). His question is answered by the old spiritual, “There is a balm in Gilead to make the wounded whole; there is a balm in Gilead to heal the sin-sick soul.” God had already told Israel with the remedy; only true repentance followed by God’s cleansing can heal the wounds of sin.

Repentance is always effective. Other medicines may lose their potency over time, but God’s solution never has. If God provided ancient Israel the means to be cured, how much greater His provision at Calvary. Jesus came as the Great Physician of both soul and body (Luke 5:30–32; notice Isa. 53:4 quoted in Matt. 8:16–17). He forgives all our sins and heals all our diseases (Ps. 103:3).

Judah’s religious rituals did not absolve her sins; they only increased her condemnation (vv. 10–15). God prefers obedience to sacrifice (v. 11; 1 Sam. 15:22; Prov. 21:3; Hos. 6:6). He was far more concerned about Israel’s holiness than their liturgical (religious) calendar (vv. 13–14). God gave these rites to Israel, but their hearts were far from God, and they had no love for their neighbors (vv. 4, 15–17). They prayed and offered sacrifices and then returned to injustice and bloodshed. Without love, their religious activities were utterly useless (Deut. 6:5).

God’s entire law hinges on love—love for God and love for others (Matt. 22:37–40). These two commands are inseparable. Repeatedly, God condemned the rampant greed and violence of Israel (Isa. 3:13–15; 5:7–8, 20–23; Ezek. 22:27–31; 33:25–26). God refused to hear her prayers because of her bloodshed (v. 15). Injustices committed against other people are an affront to God Himself because man bears the very image of God (1 John 4:20).

Note: Although God addresses “Israel,” the message is primarily directed to the Southern Kingdom of Judah (v. 1).

Lesson Setting

Person of Note

Isaiah (ī zā’ ə) prophesied during the last half of the eighth century B.C. during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah.

Biblical Context: Covenants

The idea of *covenant* is key to understanding the Bible’s history and theology. At its simplest, a covenant refers to a binding agreement or treaty (Gen. 21:27; 26:28; 1 Sam. 18:3; 2 Kings 11:4). In Scripture, however, covenants also establish sacred relationships, often described in family terms (v. 2; Gen. 17:7; Exod. 6:7; Mal. 2:14).¹

The Bible first uses the word *covenant* in Genesis 6:18, when God made a covenant with Noah. God later made significant covenants with Abraham, with Israel through Moses, and with David. In Deuteronomy, the terms of the covenant were

1. Hahn, Scott. “Covenant.” In *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*.

clearly stated. Like many ancient treaties, Deuteronomy invokes blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience (Deut. 27–28).²

By Isaiah's day, Israel had repeatedly broken this covenant. Idolatry, injustice, falsehood, and violence showed that the nation had turned away from the Lord and rejected His commands.

Isaiah 1 presents God's response in the form of a covenantal lawsuit against Israel (Exod. 19:8; 24:3, 7). The Lord summons heaven and earth as witnesses (v. 2), just as Moses had warned when establishing the covenant (Deut. 4:26; 30:19). God charges His people with rebellion and calls them to account for breaking their vows.

Study Questions

Observation

1. What had Judah done in response to God who had nourished them and raised them (v. 2)?

Despite God's kindness, care, and nourishment, they had rebelled against Him. They had repaid His good with evil.

2. How had rebellious Israel survived at all, given their sin and rebellion (v. 9; Deut. 9:14; Ps. 106:23; Lam. 3:22; Mal. 3:6)?

Israel survived only because of the mercy of God. Even in Israel's early history, God had threatened to wipe her out completely; He relented then only because of Moses' intercessions and His covenant faithfulness. In verse 9, the prophet says that if the Lord had not left a remnant, Israel would have been destroyed like Sodom and Gomorrah.

3. **(Youth)** What word picture does verse 4 give us regarding the iniquity of the people?

Isaiah describes the nation as "laden with iniquity." The image suggests a person grievously overloaded, greatly burdened. Sin had become a heavy burden upon the nation, weighing them down morally and spiritually.

Interpretation

4. How was Judah like an abandoned hut in a field (vv. 7–8)?

At that time, it was common to construct huts as temporary structures used by watchmen during harvest. Once abandoned, the huts quickly deteriorated and offered no protection. Likewise, Judah was totally helpless and falling apart. Just as a forsaken hut would inevitably fall, Judah would fall. Though she already reeled from judgment, she refused to repent.

5. What defines repentance in verses 16–20?

Verses 16–20 describe true repentance as forsaking our sins and turning toward a righteous life. God calls His people to wash themselves, stop doing evil, learn to

2. Elwell, Walter A. and Barry J. Beitzel. "Covenant." In *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*.

do good, seek justice, correct oppression, defend the fatherless, and plead for the widow. True repentance produces visible change in conduct.

6. **(Youth)** Why did God not appreciate the sacrifices, special days of worship, worship assemblies, and prayers of the Israelites (vv. 11–15)?

God rejected Israel's worship because it was hypocritical. The people continued offering sacrifices and observing religious days, yet they lived in violence and injustice. Their outward worship was not matched by repentance or obedience. Because their hands were "full of blood," God refused to listen to their prayers.

Application

7. We no longer sacrifice animals or burn incense in our worship, but how are we at risk of the same sinful attitudes described in verses 10–15?

Although we no longer offer sacrifices, we can fall into the same temptation to view our religion as a checklist. Our checklist might include any number of good things, such as prayer, Bible reading, or church attendance. But if this outward piety is not paired with a changed heart, it is worthless. Empty religion is worthless before God. We might try to use outward piety to hide or excuse a sinful life. Do we go to church on Sunday, yet slander our brother on Monday?

8. Judah had a hearing problem (vv. 2–3, 10, 18). What keeps us from hearing God (Ps. 46:10; 62:1)?

We have countless distractions: technology, work, sleep, food, hobbies, and so on. These things are not always sinful, but they can easily drown out the still small voice of God. Scripture calls us to quiet our hearts in His presence and take time to listen.

9. **(Youth)** Unlike the animals, Judah did not know their owner or their source of sustenance (vv. 2–3). How can we learn to know our God and receive spiritual food (Ps. 1:2; Ezek. 18:30; Heb. 3:13)?

We grow in knowing God by feeding on His Word consistently and responding with obedience. The Bible calls us to meditate on God's law, turn from sin in true repentance, and encourage each other daily, while we have a chance, so that we are not hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

Teacher Helps

Studying the Lesson

Personal Preparation

- Ask God for a clean heart and a reverent fear of Him (Ps. 51:10). Allow Him to continue His transforming work (Eph. 2:10) so you can teach from the heart.
- Research the text, Related Scriptures, Lesson Setting, and Quarterly Introduction.
- As you read, notice:
 - God’s faithful mercy and provision despite Israel’s sin and rebellion.
 - The devastating, debilitating effects of sin.
 - God’s hatred of religious show and empty ritual.

God’s Diagnosis (Isaiah 1:1-9)

1. **Read** the period when Isaiah prophesied and under which kings (v. 1).
2. **Notice** God laments that Judah rebuffed His care of them and rebelled (vv. 2–4).
3. **Consider** the question , “Why should you be stricken anymore?” (vv. 5–9).

God’s Remedy (Isaiah 1:10-20)

1. **Observe** Judah compared to Sodom and Gomorrah: God rejects their religious ritual because their hands are “full of blood” (vv. 10–15).
2. **Notice** repentance described: wash yourselves, stop doing evil, learn to do good, seek justice, and help the oppressed (vv. 16–17).
3. **Understand** God’s invitation: He promises cleansing forgiveness. Obedience brings blessing, but rebellion brings judgment (vv. 18–20).

Teaching the Lesson

Introduction

- Pray that God would speak clearly as His Word is presented and discussed. Ask Him to give both teacher and students tender hearts.
- Optional: Discuss briefly the kings under whom Isaiah ministered.
 1. *Uzziah* (Azariah) – 783–742 B.C.*

A good king for most of his reign but he ended it poorly. His success led to pride. He entered the temple to burn incense though he was not a priest and was struck with leprosy (2 Chron. 26:16–19).
 2. *Jotham* – 742–735 B.C.

A good king who avoided his father’s mistake of entering the temple, although the people did not follow his example (2 Chron. 27:1–2).

*These debated dates follow Albright.

3. *Ahaz* – 735–715 B.C.

An evil king who worshipped other gods and practiced the abominations of the surrounding nations (2 Kings 16:1–3).

4. *Hezekiah* – 715–687 B.C.

An exceptionally good king who restored the worship of Yahweh and destroyed many articles of idolatrous worship (2 Kings 18:1–5).

God's Diagnosis (Isaiah 1:1-9)

1. **Note** that Isaiah has something important to say (vv. 2–4). He calls all heaven and earth to listen.
2. **Discuss** what causes people to turn from the One who created them (vv. 2–4).
 - a. The devil is an experienced master of deception.
 - b. We are drawn away by our own desires and enticed (James 1:14).
 - c. We often fail to think clearly when enjoying the pleasures of sin (v. 3).
 - d. Use Study Questions 1 and 9 (Youth).
3. **Notice** the sad condition of the sinner once the pleasure of sin fades: guilty, morally corrupt, under the Almighty's anger, and turned backward (v. 4).
4. **Discuss** the harm that sin produces (vv. 5–6).
 - a. "From head to toe" metaphorically refers to both spiritual and social sickness.
 - b. Sin sometimes causes physical harm.
 - c. Sin leaves people battered and bruised mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.
 - d. Sin never heals the wounds it inflicts.
5. **Discuss** how sin also brings national destruction (vv. 7–9).
 - a. Strangers devastated the land while the people looked on, powerless to stop them.
 - b. Apart from God's mercy, Judah would be totally destroyed (v. 9).
 - c. Because of God's compassion, we are not consumed (Lam. 3:22).
6. **Use** Study Questions 2, 3 (Youth), and 4.

God's Remedy (Isaiah 1:10–20)

1. **Discuss** the sin of Judah (vv. 10–15).
 - a. God doesn't mince words or downplay sin: He compares Judah to Sodom and Gomorrah (vv. 9–10).
 - b. Jesus rebuked cities that refused to repent when they saw His mighty works (Matt. 11:20–24).
 - c. What is meant by, "To what purpose" in verse 11 and "Who hath required this" in verse 12?

God tells them their costly offerings are useless because they are not accompanied by repentant hearts. He questions their right to "tread my courts." God desires a broken and contrite heart; that is an acceptable sacrifice (Ps. 51:16–17).

- d. Their religious holidays and feasts, some of them commanded in Scripture, are called “iniquity” and “trouble.” Why does God refuse their prayers?
Because the hands they spread and lift to Him are filled with blood (v. 15). Unconfessed sin always separates people from God (Isa. 59:1–3; Ps. 66:18).
 - e. The sacrifices that pointed forward to Christ were meaningless when sincere repentance and godly sorrow were absent. Continuing in sin is not repentance. Godly sorrow leads to true change (2 Cor. 7:10).
 - f. Use Study Questions 6 (Youth) and 7.
2. **Discuss** the remedy for sin (vv. 16–20).
- a. Verses 10–15 discuss what is *not* an effective remedy; verses 16 and 17 reveal the true remedy: “Wash you, make you clean.”
 - b. What does it mean to “learn to do well”?
Acting on good intentions is often a process of practice and perseverance. We must continue seeking judgment and helping the needy (v. 17).
 - c. What is God’s plea in verses 18–20?
 - i. His plea is for us to reason together. We really can be cleansed. The heavy burden of sin (v. 4) can be lifted. What was horrible can now be made new and good (v. 18).
 - ii. If we are willing and obedient, our needs will be supplied. If we rebel, we will be destroyed. The choice is clear (vv. 19–20).
 - iii. The certainty of this promise rests on God Himself. Jehovah, who cannot lie, has spoken it. His plea is for us to trust Him (Titus 1:2).
 - d. Use Study Questions 5 and 8.

Conclusion

Summarize: (1) Refusing to know and consider God results in spiritual wounds and devastation. (2) Insincere attempts at worship are useless, regardless of the sacrifice. (3) The only reasonable response is to turn to God in genuine repentance and receive His cleansing and grace to live above sin.

Practical Applications

1. Part of truly knowing God and learning to consider His ways is cultivating a grateful heart. Thank Him daily that He cares for us just as He did for Israel (vv. 2–3).
2. It is often easier to recognize others’ sins than your own. Ask God to reveal your true spiritual condition and to guard you from hypocrisy (v. 4; Rom. 2:1).
3. Sin wounds us. When you recognize sin—whether your own or that of others—seek God’s forgiveness. Ask for grace to forgive. Sin never heals itself; it must be brought before God (vv. 5–6).
4. Isolation and weakness often follow persistent sin. When we see our spiritual vulnerability, we should humble ourselves before God and seek His protection and restoration (v. 8).

5. Before you worship, ask God to examine your heart and reveal any hidden sin and give you a clean heart (Ps. 139:23–24). When He convicts you, agree with Him and confess your sins. Singing, prayer, and other acts of worship are worthless if your heart remains unrepentant (vv. 10–15).
6. True repentance requires decisive action. Turn away from sinful habits and pursue a clean life before God (v. 16).
7. Proper reasoning sees things from God’s perspective (v. 18). Human reasoning justifies sin, but God’s wisdom leads to humility and righteousness (James 3:17–18). When facing decisions or temptations, seek God’s wisdom in prayer and through His Word.
8. Recognize the devastating effects of continuing in sin. Remembering sin’s consequences cultivates a proper fear of God. Learning the importance of walking in the Spirit helps you to avoid fulfilling the lust of the flesh (vv. 19–20; Rom. 8:4–5).

Help for the Superintendent

Suggested Devotional Reading: Psalm 50

In Psalm 50, the mighty God, Jehovah, speaks to His people. There is no one who can oppose Him, ignore Him, or escape His authority. He will not keep silence (v. 3). Fire goes before Him as a sign of His righteous judgment.

God is not impressed with costly sacrifices when hearts remain unchanged. Every creature already belongs to Him. If He were hungry, He would not tell us (vv. 11–12).

Instead, God desires our praise and thanks. He wants us to cry out to Him when we are in trouble. Then He will deliver us, and we can glorify Him even more (v. 15).

But to the wicked He says, “What right do you have to talk of my laws or to speak of my covenant?” (v. 16). The psalm ends with a sober warning: those who forget God must stop and consider their ways. Whoever offers real praise to God and walks in obedience will see His salvation.

Memory Verse

They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

Isaiah 11:9

Lesson Focus

King Jesus' reign brings righteousness and peace.

The Reign of Righteousness

Israel would fall like a hewn tree, but Israel's enemies would also be struck down for their pride (Isa. 10). A green shoot would emerge from the charred stump of Israel's holy seed. God offered hope to both Israel and her enemies through a King who would reign in righteousness and bring peace. Have you given your allegiance to Him?

A Branch From Jesse

Isaiah 11:1–9

- ¹ And there shall come forth a ^arod out of the stem of Jesse,
And a Branch shall grow out of his roots:
- ² And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him,
The spirit of wisdom and understanding,
The spirit of counsel and might,
The spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD;
- ³ And shall make him of quick understanding in the
fear of the LORD:
And he shall not ^bjudge after the sight of his eyes,
Neither reprove after the hearing of his ears:
- ⁴ But with righteousness shall he judge the poor,
And reprove with equity for the meek of the earth:
And he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth,
And with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.
- ⁵ And righteousness shall be the ^cgirdle of his loins,
And faithfulness the girdle of his ^dreins.
- ⁶ The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb,
And the leopard shall lie down with the ^ekid;
And the calf and the young lion and the ^ffatling together;
And a little child shall lead them.
- ⁷ And the cow and the bear shall feed;
Their young ones shall lie down together:
And the lion shall eat straw like the ox.
- ⁸ And the ^gsucking child shall play on the hole of the asp,
And the weaned child shall put his hand on the
^hcockatrice' den.
- ⁹ They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain:

^arod (v. 1) – a shoot of new growth

^bjudge (v. 3) – govern, do justice, decide for

^cgirdle (v. 5) – belt

^dreins (v. 5) – waist

^ekid (v. 6) – young goat

^ffatling (v. 6) – fattened calf or yearling

^gsucking (v. 8) – nursing

^hcockatrice (v. 8) – viper, serpent

For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD,
As the waters cover the sea.

A Banner for All

Isaiah 11:10–16

¹⁰ And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse,
Which shall stand for an ⁱensign of the people;
To it shall the Gentiles seek:
And his rest shall be glorious.

¹¹ And it shall come to pass in that day,
That the Lord shall set his hand again the second time
To ⁱrecover the remnant of his people,
Which shall be left, from Assyria,
And from Egypt, and from Pathros,
And from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar,
And from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea.

¹² And he shall set up an ensign for the nations,
And shall assemble the outcasts of Israel,
And gather together the dispersed of Judah
From the four corners of the earth.

¹³ The envy also of Ephraim shall depart,
And the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off:
Ephraim shall not envy Judah,
And Judah shall not vex Ephraim.

¹⁴ But they shall fly upon the shoulders of the Philistines
toward the west;
They shall spoil them of the east together:
They shall ⁱlay their hand upon Edom and Moab;
And the children of Ammon shall obey them.

¹⁵ And the LORD shall utterly destroy the tongue of the
Egyptian sea;
And with his mighty wind shall he shake his hand
over the river,
And shall smite it in the seven streams,
And make men go over ⁱdryshod.

¹⁶ And there shall be an highway for the remnant of
his people,
Which shall be left, from Assyria;
Like as it was to Israel
In the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt.

ⁱensign (v. 10) – banner or signal flag
ⁱrecover (v. 11) – acquire, reclaim, redeem,
purchase

ⁱlay their hand upon (v. 14) – subdue or take over
ⁱdryshod (v. 15) – in sandals

Related Scriptures

Exodus 14:26–31; 15:16–18
Psalm 20:5–9; 110
Isaiah 35:4–10; 40:3; 51:10;
56:6–7
Joel 2:32
John 1:32–34; 16:7–11; 20:19–22
Revelation 1:16; 2:16; 7:9–15;
19:11–16

Lesson Commentary

A Branch From Jesse

Isaiah 11 foretells the kingdom of Jesus Christ. Hope of Jesus' kingdom shone behind the cloud of national judgment. Isaiah warned Israel's rulers that they would kneel as Assyria's prisoners or fall among their slain (Isa. 10:1–4). He also warned Hezekiah that Judah's sons and possessions would be carried off to Babylon (2 Kings 20:12–18). Yet God still offered His people hope.

This holy Branch would arise from Jesse's line (v. 1). Isaiah calls the Branch the “son of Jesse” rather than the “son of David.” Jesus is not merely another king in David's line, but a *new* David. After the wicked kings of Israel and Judah, the Branch marks a new beginning. Jesus inherits David's promises yet surpasses David's authority; He is David's Lord (Ps. 110:1; Mark 12:35–37).

The Spirit of the Lord would rest upon this new King. The Spirit had empowered leaders like Moses, Joshua, and David (Num. 11:17; Deut. 34:9; 1 Sam. 16:13). The Spirit was often sent for a specific task (Exod. 31:3–5; Judg. 6:34). In the same way, Jesus' prophetic mission was sealed by the Holy Spirit (Isa. 61:1–2; Luke 4:16–21).

Isaiah describes Jesus' sevenfold anointing by the Holy Spirit (v. 2)—seven represents fullness and perfection. Revelation 5 describes Jesus as a Lamb with seven eyes, the “seven Spirits of God.”

Unlike the Spirit's partial operations experienced by others, the Spirit rested on Jesus without measure (John 3:34–35). From that fullness, Jesus poured out the Holy Spirit on His church (John 16:7; 20:22).

“Make him of quick understanding” in verse 3 is better translated “he will delight in.” The Hebrew word literally means *smelling*, which indicates a keen sense of perception, such as a deer has. The coming King would delight in obeying the Lord. God's joy was in Jesus' perfect obedience as a man (Heb. 10:7–9).

He would be known by His righteousness (vv. 4, 5). He would wear faithfulness like a belt, unlike Judah's faithless kings. He would judge without prejudice, unlike Israel's corrupt judges (Amos 5:12). He would weigh matters with insight (v. 3; John 7:24).

Verses 6–9 picture the King's transforming reign. Even the violence of the animal world will end. Some believe this will happen when God makes all things new (Isa. 65:17; Rev. 21:1–5); others expect it in a literal millennial reign of Christ (Dan. 7:22–28; Rev. 20:1–6).

Jesus announced that He brought God's Kingdom (Luke 11:20; 16:16). The church, where Jesus reigns, is a place of great transformation. Here the Gentiles are accepted and can live in harmony with the Jews (vv. 6–7; Acts 10:9–35). Even enemies of God's people can become part of His peaceable kingdom (Acts 8:3; 9:1, 17–21).

A Banner for All

God promised to recover the scattered remnant of His people (v. 11). He had redeemed Israel from Egypt once; He would redeem them again (v. 16; Exod. 15:16). Jesus has redeemed Jew and Gentile alike with His blood (1 Pet. 1:18–19).

Isaiah did not restrict hope to Israel. In verses 10–13, he predicted that even Gentiles would rally to the new, redeeming King. He would gather His own from the nations scattered at Babel (Gen. 11:1–9) like He did the scattered Jews. Those who follow the Lamb are from every people (Rev. 7:9–17).

Was the regathering of the Jewish exiles fulfilled under Zerubbabel and Ezra? The grandeur of Isaiah’s vision suggests something far greater. Jesus, the righteous Branch, had not yet appeared (v. 1), and the post-exilic community did not resemble the mighty kingdom of verse 14.

Some believe verses 11–16 refer to a future kingdom during a literal millennium. Others believe they refer to Christ’s unending rule in eternity. Still others believe the passage speaks of the advance of Jesus’ kingdom in the church. The repeated expression “in that day” (vv. 10–11) seems to imply that the Branch’s rise, redemption, rule, and conquest are not distantly separated events.

God’s kingdom has arrived, though it is not fully realized (1 John 3:2). Jews from the areas mentioned in verse 11, who gathered at Pentecost and heard about Jesus (Acts 2:7–21), were among the first to find redemption. Jesus was preached to the scattered Jews, and many were saved (Acts 11:19; 13:26; 17:1–2). Many Gentiles were attracted to the Gospel as it spread to the nations (Acts 1:8; Rom. 1:5; 10:18; 15:18). One glorious day, God will bring all His people together in a final gathering (Rev. 21:3).

Hostility among the tribes of Israel existed long before the division of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms (v. 13). They fought bloody wars. Only the Branch of Jesse would end their quarrels. Jesus is a King of peace who unites those near and far-off into one body of love (Eph. 2:13–22; 1 Thess. 3:12).

Lesson Setting

Persons of Note

Jesse (je’ sē) was the father of King David, who became the king of Israel.

Ephraim (ē’ frē əm) was the second son of Joseph and the patriarch of the tribe of Ephraim. Although he was younger, Ephraim was blessed before Manasseh (Gen. 48:17–20).

Judah (jü’ də) was the fourth son of Jacob (Israel) and the great-grandson of Abraham. He was the patriarch of the tribe of Judah, from which King David—and King Jesus—came (Gen. 49:9–10).

Historical Context: Sacred Mountains

The Branch would rule from a holy mountain (v. 9). Sacred mountains were common in ancient times,¹ but God was not confined to one mountain (Isa. 6:3); He created them all.

God revealed Himself on several mountains in Israel’s history. He led Abraham to Mount Moriah to offer Isaac (Gen. 22:1–2), and Solomon later built the temple

1. D. B. Sandy, “Mountain Imagery,” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Prophets*.

there (2 Chron. 3:1). Peter referred to the Mount of Transfiguration, where Jesus' glory was revealed, as "the holy mount" (2 Peter 1:18).

Verse 9 likely refers to Mount Zion, the mountain of God's temple (Ps. 78:68–69). Zion could refer to the city of David (2 Sam. 5:7), Jerusalem (Ps. 51:18), or God's people (Ps. 74:2). It symbolized God's presence and kingship (Ps. 2:6; 110:1–2), and Israel centered many future hopes on Zion (Joel 2:32).

The New Testament expands the spiritual meaning of Zion. The church is no longer oriented to earthly Jerusalem but to the Jerusalem above (Gal. 4:25–26). Believers have come to Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, where God rules His people (Heb. 12:22–24). One day the Kingdom of Jesus will fill the whole earth (Dan. 2:35).

Study Questions

Observation

1. What qualities will the promised Branch possess (vv. 2–3)?

He will have the spirit of the LORD, spirit of wisdom and understanding, spirit of counsel and might, spirit of knowledge and fear of the LORD, and quick understanding.

2. What people would be redeemed by the King (vv. 10–12)?

The King claims the believing Jewish remnant; He also claims the nations (Gentiles). This passage shows God's great love for Israel and His love that extends to every race and culture.

3. **(Youth)** What will fill the earth as waters cover the sea (v. 9; Hab. 2:14)?

The earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord. Everyone will have heard of Jesus. The confusion of false religions will be gone. The writer of Hebrews understood the prophecy of knowing the Lord in the context of the new covenant (Heb. 10:16).

Interpretation

4. In verses 6–9, little children play with formerly dangerous animals, and former predators and prey live together without fear. What does this imagery teach us?

When Jesus truly reigns, there is peace, tranquility, and harmony. In a spiritual sense, this may be viewed as all manner of former sinners, redeemed and transformed by Jesus, dwelling together peaceably in Christ's body, and the innocent safe among them. In a physical sense, Creation will function as God meant it to when the Prince of Peace rules.

5. What ancient divisions would the King end (vv. 10–13; Isa. 56:6–7)?

The King would end the long-lasting feuds between the tribes of Israel. He would reunite the northern tribes (Ephraim) and southern tribes (Judah) in His kingdom. But He would not only unite divided Jews; He would unite them with the

Gentiles. Jews avoided Gentiles, calling them unclean like the wolf and the bear (vv. 6–7; Acts 10:9–20, 28, 34–35). Under King Jesus, they would become one (Eph. 2:14–22).

6. **(Youth)** What is meant by the Messiah being of “quick understanding in the fear of the Lord” (v. 3)?

Jesus did not struggle to understand or judge properly. He understood the proper fear of the Lord, and He did not judge based on first impressions or impulse. His judgement was based on the Father’s will and was fair, just, and compassionate. He judged promptly and accurately.

Application

7. We serve the Prince of Peace, yet our churches often have conflict. How could we experience more of God’s peace (v. 9; 1 Cor. 14:33; 2 Cor. 13:11; Gal. 5:22; Col. 3:12–15; 1 Thess. 5:13; James 4:1, 2, 7)?

Peace is a fruit of the Holy Spirit and flows from knowing God. We should ask God to pour out His peace among us. Peace is found only where Christ rules. When turmoil fills the church, we should ask ourselves whether we have truly submitted our desires to Jesus. Our carnal nature seeks praise and control, which leads to envy, quarrels, and divisions. Instead, we should pursue humility, unity, and peace in the kingdom of God.

8. What kind of judgments are we called to make (v. 3; 1 Sam. 16:7; Matt. 7:1–2, 16; John 3:17; 7:24; 8:15–18)?

Jesus did not come into the world to condemn the world, but to save it. We are not here to condemn people either. Jesus expects us to make moral judgments and even to confront sin—especially in ourselves. But appearances can mislead us. Jesus warned us not to judge with bias, hypocrisy, or harshness. We need godly humility and wisdom.

9. **(Youth)** Jesus did not judge by what He saw or heard but by his “quick understanding in the fear of the LORD” (v. 3). What should guide us when forming conclusions about what is happening around us, especially the actions of others (Prov. 18:13; John 8:7–9; Rom. 2:1; James 1:19)?

We need to be quick to hear and slow to speak. We need to look at truth from all sides before we make a judgment call. Humility reminds us that we could be wrong and that we, too, are sinners in need of grace. Our motives in discerning truth should be to help others, not condemn them. In this way, we learn to judge wisely without becoming judgmental (1 Cor. 6:5).

Studying the Lesson

Personal Preparation

- Ask God to give you a clear perspective on this prophecy so you know what should be taught with confidence and what must be trusted to Him to reveal in His time.
- Read the text, Related Scriptures, and Lesson Setting.
- As you read, notice:
 - “The Branch” is wise, righteous, compassionate, and powerful.
 - God will bring peace and tranquility to all creation.
 - God will judge the enemies of His people.

A Branch From Jesse (Isaiah 11:1–9)

1. **Notice** the seven spirits mentioned in verse 2. Are they the ones mentioned in Revelation 3:1?
2. **Consider** the characteristics of the coming Messiah that make Him a faithful and just judge (vv. 3–5).
3. **Think** about fierce animals at peace with children and defenseless prey during Christ’s reign (vv. 6–9). Literal or figurative?

A Banner for All (Isaiah 11:10–16)

1. **Rejoice** in verses 10–11.
 - a. Gentiles seek the Messiah and find glorious rest in Him (Matt. 11:28–29).
 - b. Israel’s remnant gather from all nations (v. 11).
2. **Reflect** on verses 12–13.
 - a. Outcasts gather (v. 12).
 - b. Enemies live peacefully (v. 13).
3. **Study** verses 14–16.
 - a. Evil subdued (v. 14).
 - b. Land changes make travel possible (vv. 15–16).

Teaching the Lesson

Introduction

- Ask God to bring renewed anticipation for the day Jesus returns to make everything right again.

A Branch From Jesse (Isaiah 11:1–9)

1. **Discuss** the Branch growing out of the roots (v. 1).
 - a. What imagery was used of Israel and her coming judgment (v. 1; Isa. 10:33–34; 37:24)?

Israel is likened to a tree. Judgment was coming like a logger felling a forest. Israel would fall like a hewn tree and be left as a stump—and so would her enemies (Isa. 10:12–15).

- b. Who is the Branch, and why is He said to spring from Jesse, not David (v. 1)? *A green Branch would emerge from the charred stump of Israel (vv. 1, 10; Isa. 4:2; Jer. 23:5; Zech. 6:12). Jesus is not merely another king in David's line, but a new David. Jesus represents a new beginning; He inherits David's promises yet surpasses David's authority.*
2. **Discuss** each of the seven qualifying spirits (attributes) of the Messiah (vv. 2–3).
- Use Study Question 1.
 - Spirit of the Lord*: Jesus was a man, but much more than a man. He was God in flesh. He possessed the Spirit and character of the Father—fully God and fully human (Luke 4:18; Col. 2:9; Heb. 4:15).
 - Spirit of wisdom*: Jesus had heavenly wisdom: pure, peaceable, gentle, easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy (James 3:17).
 - Spirit of understanding*: Understanding comes from God's mouth. His understanding is beyond our ability to search out (Isa. 40:28). People were amazed at Jesus' understanding even as a child (Luke 2:47).
 - Spirit of counsel*: Isaiah 9:6 refers to Jesus as our Counselor. Psalm 32:8 says God will guide (Hebrew *counsel*) us where and how to go. Psalm 73:24 says He will guide us with His counsel and then receive us to glory.
 - Spirit of might*: God is mighty enough to form the stars, call them by name, and hold them in place (Isa. 40:26). He also shares His power with us (Isa. 40:29). Someday Jesus will return in power and great glory (Matt. 24:30).
 - Spirit of knowledge*: God has searched us and known us. He knew all our members before we were born. His knowledge is too high for us to attain (Ps. 139:1–6, 15–16). In Jesus are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col. 2:3). His wisdom and knowledge are deep, unsearchable, and past finding out (Rom. 11:33).
 - Spirit of the fear of the Lord*: Jesus had deep respect and reverence for His Father. He obeyed His will even though it cost Him His life (John 10:18; Phil. 2:8). He taught what He had heard from His Father (John 15:15).
 - Use Study Question 9 (Youth).
3. **Discuss** what “quick understanding in the fear of the LORD” means (v. 3).
- Other translations say that He delights in the fear of the Lord.
 - Justice for the wicked and mercy for the poor characterize His reign (v. 4).
 - He is clothed in righteousness and faithfulness (v. 5).
 - Use Study Question 8.
4. **Discuss** Study Question 4.
5. **Discuss** the animals (vv. 6–9).
- Do they refer to animals or to people with characteristics of these animals (literal or figurative)?
 - If sin affected all creation, perhaps when Jesus reigns on earth, the effects of sin will be reversed in the animal kingdom as well.

6. **Discuss** the effects of the earth being filled with the knowledge of the Lord (v. 9).
 - a. There will be no violence or destruction.
 - b. Use Study Questions 3 (Youth) and 7.

A Banner for All (Isaiah 11:10–16)

1. **Discuss** Jesus' reign on earth (vv. 10–14).
 - a. Jesus will be a banner for all people.
 - b. Gentiles will seek Him (v. 10).
 - c. His rest will be glorious. Even now, He invites all who are weary and burdened to come to Him (Matt. 11:28–30).
 - d. There will be a second gathering of Jews who are scattered throughout the nations of the earth (vv. 11–12).
 - e. Jesus will bring peace between the Jews and the surrounding nations and peace within the Jewish tribes themselves (vv. 13–14).
 - f. Consider His past, present, and future reign.
 - g. Use Study Question 5.
2. **Discuss** the recovering (redemption) found in Jesus (v. 11).
 - a. The Hebrew word *qanah* (ka nă') is used in both verse 11 (*recover*) and in Exodus 15:16 (*purchase*). This word is connected to commerce but not necessarily actual payment. The emphasis is on acquisition.
 - b. Jesus redeems Jew and Gentile with His blood (1 Pet. 1:18–19).
 - c. Use Study Question 2.
3. **Discuss** the landform changes (vv. 15–16).
 - a. The “tongue of the Egyptian sea” likely refers to the Gulf of Suez.
 - b. Just as God made a path through the sea when Israel escaped Egypt, He still has the power to make a passageway.
 - c. Use Study Question 6 (Youth).
 - d. This sea will be divided, becoming a “highway” like the path God made for the Israelites through the Red Sea. This passage points toward a new exodus for all of God's people (vv. 10–12).
4. The next chapter, Isaiah 12, describes the praise and joy that will fill God's people when Jesus reigns supreme.

Conclusion

Summarize: (1) Jesus is qualified to rule His kingdom, (2) He brings order, knowledge, and peace to the lives in His kingdom, and (3) He makes a way even when a “Red Sea” stands before His people.

Practical Applications

1. God often brings new life out of what seems finished or hopeless. When circumstances look like a dead stump, remember that God can still bring forth His purposes (v. 1).

2. We can fully trust Jesus. He has the Spirit of wisdom and understanding (v. 2). His wisdom comes from the Father, and He knows what He is doing. When we face uncertainty, we can confidently trust His guidance.
3. Jesus did not judge by appearances. We should be careful not to form quick opinions about others but seek understanding and truth before making judgments (v. 3).
4. We can trust Jesus because He is perfectly righteous and faithful (v. 5). He always does what is right and never fails to keep His word. His faithfulness never falters.
5. Christ's kingdom is marked by peace. As His followers, we should pursue peace in our homes, churches, and communities instead of stirring conflict (v. 6).
6. When the world discourages us, we must take courage in remembering that Jesus will return and make everything right. He will bring order to chaos and turn violence into peace and danger into safety (vv. 4–9).
7. We should fearlessly continue to tell others about Jesus. Someday the whole earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord (v. 9). We can speak with confidence, knowing that God's truth will win in the end.
8. Jesus is a banner for all people. No race or nation is excluded from His invitation. We should welcome others into His kingdom and point them to Him (v. 10).
9. Comfort yourself knowing old rivalries will disappear in Christ's kingdom (v. 13).
10. God can remove every obstacle to accomplish His purposes. When the path seems impossible, remember that nothing can prevent Him from fulfilling His plans (vv. 15–16).

Help for the Superintendent

Suggested Devotional Reading: Psalm 72

Psalm 72 is a prayer for Solomon, but it seems to have prophetic elements of Jesus as well. Notice in verses 4–5 that “the king’s son” shall save the poor and break in pieces the oppressor. People will fear Him for all generations. This could only refer to Jesus. In verse 8, His dominion is from sea to sea and unto the ends of the earth. He shall redeem souls, and lives are precious in His sight (v. 14).

His name shall endure forever. Men shall be blessed in Him (v. 17; Gen. 12:3), and all nations will call Him blessed (Phil. 2:10–11). Verse 19 praises Jehovah’s glorious name and says, “Let the whole earth be filled with his glory.” Isaiah 11:9 from our lesson text says “the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD.”

When Jesus returns, the whole world will know Him, and His praise will be glorious. What a wonderful, glorious time it will be when He reigns as King of kings and Lord of lords!