

inteen.[®]
teacher

Partners
in a New
Creation



Inteen® *Teacher*

Partners in a New Creation

Dear Teacher,

This quarter the focus is on the collective co-laboring of the saints of God! *Inteen*® is privileged to equip you with the necessary tools to fulfill your calling as a Christian educator. This quarter discusses the ministry of prominent Old Testament prophets who foretold the coming of the Messiah. The opening lesson from Isaiah serves as a backdrop for the rest of the quarter's message, a call to partner with the true and living God. We, the body of Christ, have the grand opportunity to be co-laborers with the ever-abiding Spirit of God in reconciling, recreating, and rightly restoring all things in the eternal reign of God. This summer's quarter considers ways in which believers are partners with God in creation.

Unit I, "God Delivers and Restores," has four sessions using three chapters in Isaiah. This study explores God's predictions of the future destruction of Babylon and deliverance for Israel. These events were evidence of God's power at work to grant mercy and redemption to the penitent and to restore God's people to a state of peace and prosperity.

Unit II, "The Word: The Agent of Creation," has five lessons taken from John's Gospel. The lessons stress how the Creating Word, at work in and with humanity, became flesh, healed the sick, save the lost, resurrected the dead, and granted — through the Holy Spirit — peace.

Unit III, "The Great Hope of the Saints," has four lessons drawn from Revelation. The study helps learners envision the new home and city God has prepared for the redeemed. In this new heavenly environment, the saints will enjoy the new water of eternal life.

As always, thank you for partnering with *Inteen*®, as we prepare the heart, transform the mind, and plant spiritual truths that change lives!

Peace and Blessings,
La Nej A. Garrison, M.A.
Inteen® Editor
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Do you have questions, comments, or suggestions? I want to hear from you! Send your thoughts to the editor.

It's a Faith Thing ... You Need to Understand!

Once asked my dad how did we as Christians know that Jesus was the only way. Who's to say that people who worship other forms of gods are wrong? I was wondering about my friends of other religions who didn't believe Jesus was the Messiah. And I was wondering just how did we know that Jesus really was more than an ordinary Man.

My father said, "That's where our faith comes in." I didn't fully understand what he meant then, but I'm beginning to understand his statement better and better.

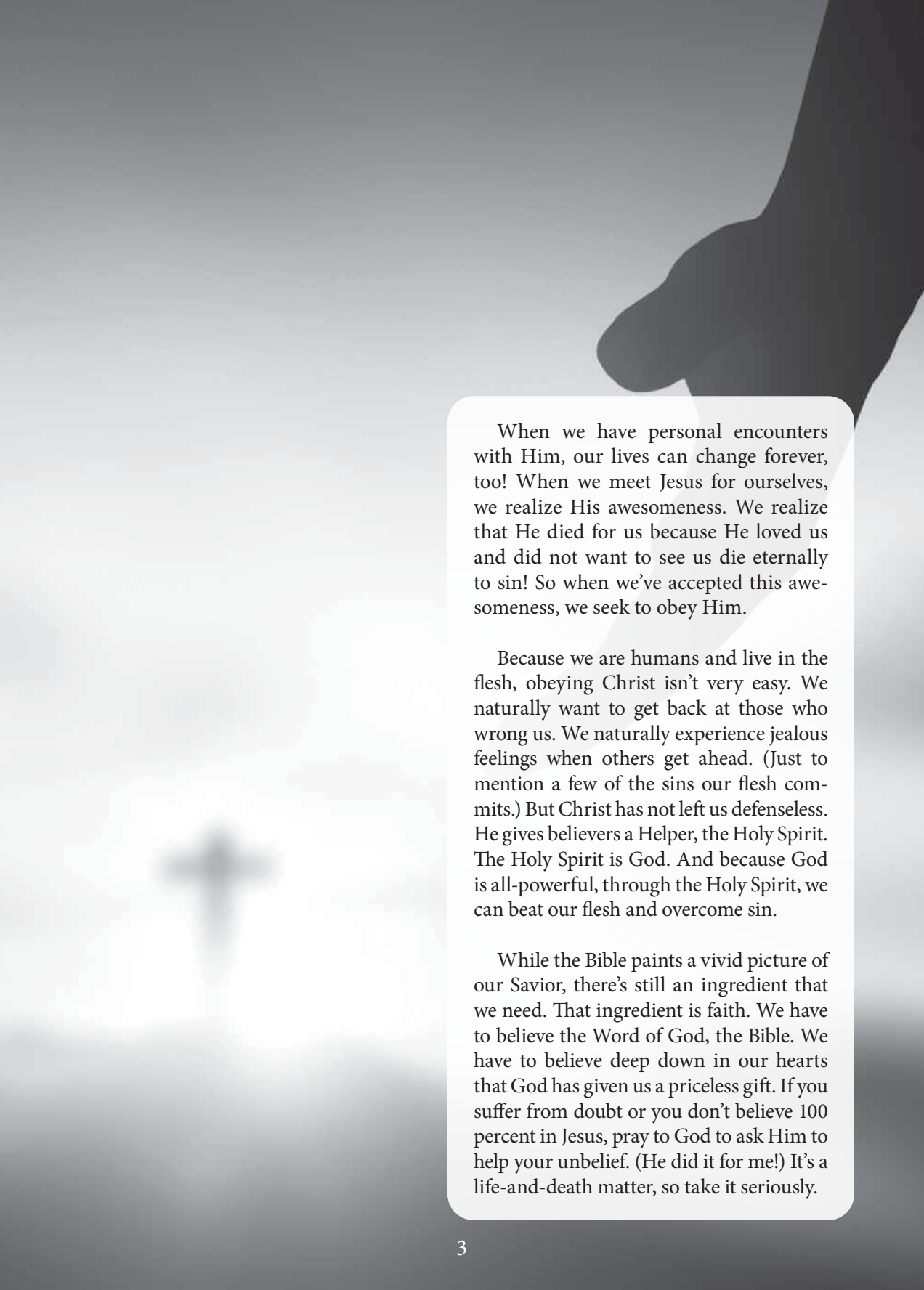
You see, faith is believing. For Christians, that's believing God sent His only begotten Son to die for our sins. Now, I wasn't around when Jesus was hung on the cross, but the Bible gives explicit details of exactly what happened. The four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) were written by different people, yet their stories corroborate and record the earthly life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

In John's account of Jesus, John starts off by telling us about Jesus as the Word. From John, we learn that the Jesus who was born in Bethlehem, lived long before then. The Word was with God in the be-

ginning (John 1:1). This verse dispels any doubt of the sovereignty of Jesus. He is God, the God who created the heavens and earth. And God put on human flesh to walk the Earth and become the ultimate sin offering for me and you. Now that's a good God.

We also study the message of John the Baptist, who set the stage for the coming of Jesus. When he saw Jesus, he exclaimed, "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29, KJV). John knew exactly who Jesus was and why He came to Earth.

But just as we'll find in today's society, not everyone readily accepted Jesus even when He physically walked the Earth. Many didn't believe Him, and others didn't know or understand who He was—even though they saw Him walk the Earth, perform miracles, and live a blameless life. However, some people who had personal encounters with Him found that their lives were changed forever (like Nicodemus in John 3 and the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4).



When we have personal encounters with Him, our lives can change forever, too! When we meet Jesus for ourselves, we realize His awesomeness. We realize that He died for us because He loved us and did not want to see us die eternally to sin! So when we've accepted this awesomeness, we seek to obey Him.

Because we are humans and live in the flesh, obeying Christ isn't very easy. We naturally want to get back at those who wrong us. We naturally experience jealous feelings when others get ahead. (Just to mention a few of the sins our flesh commits.) But Christ has not left us defenseless. He gives believers a Helper, the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is God. And because God is all-powerful, through the Holy Spirit, we can beat our flesh and overcome sin.

While the Bible paints a vivid picture of our Savior, there's still an ingredient that we need. That ingredient is faith. We have to believe the Word of God, the Bible. We have to believe deep down in our hearts that God has given us a priceless gift. If you suffer from doubt or you don't believe 100 percent in Jesus, pray to God to ask Him to help your unbelief. (He did it for me!) It's a life-and-death matter, so take it seriously.

Quarter At-A-Glance June 2022

Partners in a New Creation

Members of Christ's body have the grand opportunity to be co-laborers with the ever-abiding Spirit of God in reconciling, re-creating, and rightly restoring all things in the eternal reign of God. This summer quarter considers ways in which believers are partners with God in creation.

UNIT 1 • God Delivers and Restores

This unit has four lessons. Using three chapters of Isaiah, this study explores God's predictions of the future destruction of Babylon and deliverance for Israel. These events were evidence of God's power at work to grant mercy and redemption to the penitent and to restore God's people to a state of peace and prosperity.

UNIT 2 • The Word: The Agent of Creation

This unit has five lessons taken from John's Gospel. The lessons stress how the Creating Word, at work in and with humanity, became flesh, healed the sick, saved the lost, resurrected the dead and granted—through the Holy Spirit—peace.

UNIT 3 • The Great Hope of the Saints

In this unit, a four-lesson study draws from Revelation to help learners envision the new home and city God has prepared for the redeemed. In this new heavenly environment, the saints will enjoy the new water of eternal life.

NOWHERE TO RUN

GOD FORETELLS DESTRUCTION

LESSON AIM:

By the end of the lesson, teens will:

- (1) examine the prophet Isaiah’s warning of impending judgment and response to idolatry; (2) identify the features of idolatry; and (3) plan to respond to God’s warnings.

MATERIALS NEEDED

Bible, student magazines, paper, pens, images of ancient Babylon

OPEN THE LESSON

Open today’s lesson with an activity. Divide students into groups of two or three. Either provide students with the research material or ask students to find a major company, a popular leader, or a flourishing country that was destroyed. What were the factors that led to destruction? Could these circumstances have been avoided? What were the signs of impending doom?

PRESENT THE SCRIPTURES

Today’s Scripture opens with a warning of impending judgment. This text, in its larger context (Isaiah 40–48), tells of judgment coming to Babylon. The Babylonians were guilty of idolatry. They placed their faith in everything else except the living God. The opening of this chapter describes God’s righteous vengeance. They ascribed their good fortune to the multitude of sorceries and credited their blessings to the abundance of their knowledge and wisdom. Their idolatry was rooted in wickedness. They disdained the elderly and created systems that choked their resources. The Babylonians were greedy and selfish people who trusted in the predictive power of the stars. This was a willful denial of God and His Creation. Although it may have seemed

like Babylon would remain untouched by God’s judgment, Isaiah foretold the ways that God would enact His will. Two things were prophesied as signs of punishment: loss of children and widowhood. The loss of children signifies a disruption of legacy and growth for the nation. Secondly, widowhood not only implies the death of men/husbands, but this would also create a financial crisis for families and society. Though success seemed to be a sign of blessing, God’s desire is that He alone is exalted. God ultimately sees all and will not let evil and arrogance continue to go unchecked forever.

EXPLORE THE MEANING

Have the students read out loud and discuss the story “Nowhere to Run,” along with the Scripture passages, and the Scripture Discussion. Then have the students answer the questions in the Check It and Think It sections to make sure they understand the lesson.

In today’s story, Jonathan decided that his past success meant he could get away with whatever he wanted and everything he wanted would be untouched. He was wrong. Just like those who built the *Titanic*, and the rabbit in *Tortoise and the Hare*, the ancient proverb rings true: pride comes before the fall.

NEXT STEPS FOR APPLICATION

In today’s lesson, your students learned how pride and arrogance would not go unchecked. For today’s application activity, ask students

to identify ways that the Holy Spirit could be warning them. Do they put things/people before God? As a group, discuss the warning signs. How can students walk in obedience?

WORSHIP GUIDE

For the Superintendent or Teacher

Theme: God Foretells Destruction

Theme Song: “Our God Reigns” by Israel and the New Breed

Scripture: Isaiah 47

Song: “To Be Like You” by Hillsong Worship

Prayer: Dear God, we do not want to grow so arrogant that we forget You. Holy Ghost, continue to reveal those things in us, that we place before You. In Jesus’ name, amen.

FROM THE STUDENT MAGAZINE

Nowhere to Run

Jonathan was a high school chess champion. He started playing chess with his grandfather when he was a child. He picked it up fast and was very good. As good as any adult who had played for years!

He was used to competing and winning with ease, so over time, he stopped practicing with his team. Even when it came to the prestigious national championships, he was arrogant. “You guys need practice, not me,” he declared as he packed his bag up.

“Jonathon, we *all* need practice and to study the competition’s techniques. This is the national championship. Every player here is the best of the best, and they’ll all be practicing. Plus, we start early. We need to practice and rest up so we’re ready for the early start.”

Jonathan gave a dismissive wave to his teammates and made his way back to his room at the hotel. *I don’t need this. I’m already the best*, he thought.

Instead, Jonathan stayed up all night playing video games and eating junk food.

He slowly woke up the next morning and jumped when he saw the clock. He was LATE. He had 10 minutes to get to the start of the competition.

He got dressed as quickly as possible and ran to the competition site, but he was too late. “I’m just two minutes late. Let me play! I’m the standing champion!”

“Sorry,” the competition director said, “no late entries allowed, that’s the rule.”

Jonathan lost his title just like that.

Scripture Discussion

Babylon was a wealthy, powerful, and very wicked country that set itself as an enemy of God. Their wickedness was so deep that the name “Babylon” is still used by the church to describe a godless empire or culture (1 Peter 5:13; Revelation 17–18). Although Babylon was, at one time, a powerful nation, its idolatrous ways led to destruction. Our passage today first reflects how seriously God takes idolatry. Idolatry is putting anything before God. Babylon credited their success to other gods, the stars, and even themselves! The prophet Isaiah foretells of God’s judgment and destruction. This passage is a warning and a promise that God will not allow sin to go unchecked. He is constantly watching and there is no success without God. Their prideful hearts set them on a path of destruction.

NOTES

God Foretells Destruction

Bible Background • ISAIAH 47

Printed Text • ISAIAH 47:10–15 | Devotional Reading • PSALM 137

Aim for Change

By the end of this lesson, we will UNDERSTAND why God would destroy Babylon; GRAPPLE with the destructiveness of delighting in power and pleasure; and REPENT from thoughts, actions, and feelings that separate us from God.

In Focus

Jeremy's life turned around when he earned a free ride scholarship to Yale. When he graduated, he went into investment banking. His salary was more than anything his family had imagined. He could afford the finer things in life, and he wasn't ashamed to flaunt it.

Time passed and Jeremy got married and had kids of his own. He rose up in the ranks at his company and even became vice president. Soon Jeremy abandoned going to church, claiming he was too busy and that the preacher only wanted money. He also rarely visited home and often talked down about the neighborhood where he came from.

One day his wife, Judy, said, "Your mom called earlier. Wanted to see if we could come over for dinner on Friday."

"We'll see her on the Fourth," Jeremy said. "Isn't that soon enough?"

"Maybe she just wants to see her son," Judy said.

Jeremy doubted it. "Or maybe Aunt Pearl wants to ask me again if I'll cover her rent."

"Times have been hard for people in your old neighborhood."

"They were hard for me, too, but I got out of it. Why can't they? They're poor because they're just lazy and wouldn't take advantage of the opportunities they have like I did."

One day everything Jeremy trusted in came crashing down. His doctor told him he had a brain tumor. Now he wished he had a stronger relationship with God, and in the corner of his office, he knelt down to ask God to forgive him for his pride.

Has your pride ever separated you from God?

Keep in Mind

"Thus shall they be unto thee with whom thou hast laboured, even thy merchants, from thy youth: they shall wander every one to his quarter; none shall save thee."

(Isaiah 47:15, KJV)

Focal Verses

KJV **Isaiah 47:10** For thou hast trusted in thy wickedness: thou hast said, None seeth me. Thy wisdom and thy knowledge, it hath perverted thee; and thou hast said in thine heart, I am, and none else beside me.

11 Therefore shall evil come upon thee; thou shalt not know from whence it riseth: and mischief shall fall upon thee; thou shalt not be able to put it off: and desolation shall come upon thee suddenly, which thou shalt not know.

12 Stand now with thine enchantments, and with the multitude of thy sorceries, wherein thou hast laboured from thy youth; if so be thou shalt be able to profit, if so be thou mayest prevail.

13 Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels. Let now the astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up, and save thee from these things that shall come upon thee.

14 Behold, they shall be as stubble; the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame: there shall not be a coal to warm at, nor fire to sit before it.

15 Thus shall they be unto thee with whom thou hast laboured, even thy merchants, from thy youth: they shall wander every one to his quarter; none shall save thee.

The People, Places, and Times

Isaiah. Isaiah was a prophet during the eighth century. His prophetic ministry spanned the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Manasseh. Scholars have argued that Isaiah was more than likely connected to the king's court in some way, based on his call narrative. Throughout his ministry, Isaiah's prophecies are directed at Judah and its idolatry and oppression. Isaiah's prophetic ministry can be summarized as judgment, renewal, and hope as he foretold Judah's Babylonian captivity as well as its return from exile and the coming of the Messiah. Tradition tells us Isaiah was eventually sawn in half during the reign of Manasseh.

Babylon. Babylon is an ancient city, and the name Babylon can be translated as "the gate of gods." It is mentioned in the Bible, along with Egypt, as the antithesis to God's people. When Israel sinned against God through idolatry and injustice, God allowed the Babylonians to punish Israel by sending Nebuchadnezzar to conquer Judah and send the Jews into exile. Babylon remained a superpower until the

Medes and Persians conquered Babylonia in 539 BC.

Background

Isaiah prophesies the demise of Babylon (Isaiah 45). Isaiah announces the conquest of Babylon by King Cyrus of the Medo-Persian Empire. This prophecy is linked to the salvation and restoration of Israel as they return from exile under Cyrus' reign. Babylon is condemned for its idolatry (Isaiah 46). The idols of Babylon are deemed powerless. They are made from created things and cannot save their worshipers. The reign of Babylon is over, and its gods cannot protect its people.

God calls the Babylonian sorcerers and astrologers to account (Isaiah 47). Their knowledge is world-renowned, but it is powerless against the sovereign judgment of the Lord. None of their astrological understanding or spells of witchcraft can prevent the disaster coming upon them. The once proud city will be humbled through the divine arrangement of its conquest by a foreign power.

What is bad news for the Babylonians is good news for the Jews. Because of Babylon's conquest, they will gain an ally in Cyrus who will give them freedom to return to their homeland and rebuild their capital Jerusalem as well as their Temple. God assures them no idol could have foretold these things and establishes His superiority over the gods and idols of other nations (Isaiah 48). He is God and He is in control of the destiny of not only Israel but all the nations of the globe.

At-A-Glance

1. The Pride of Babylon and Its Consequences (Isaiah 47:10–11)
2. False Trust in Babylon's Expertise (vv. 12–13)
3. The Ultimate Demise of Babylon (vv. 14–15)

In Depth

1. The Pride of Babylon and Its Consequences (Isaiah 47:10–11)

God, through Isaiah, calls out Babylon's prideful attitude. They have committed wickedness brazenly as if they were accountable to no one. The Babylonians were renowned for their knowledge, and this knowledge was the source of Babylon's pride. Because of this they put themselves in the place of God by saying, "I am, and none else beside me" (v. 10). These are proud, blasphemous words which display the inward attitude of the heart.

God would not allow Babylon to remain unpunished for this sin of pride. Calamity and disaster would come upon the city in the form of the Medo-Persian Empire and King Cyrus. None of Babylon's sorcery and knowledge could conjure an escape from the Medes and Persians.

Their kingdom would be taken over, and they could do nothing about it. As believers we have no reason to despair when proud and wicked rulers or leaders are in power. Eventually all of us will come before the judgment seat of God. There none of our knowledge, wealth, or social standing will be of any use—only whether we were righteous and humble before Him.

What is your response when you see wicked and proud people in power?

2. False Trust in Babylon's Expertise (vv. 12–13)

Isaiah mocks the knowledge and abilities of Babylon's sorcerers and astrologers. No matter what they do, they could not stop the judgment of God. Isaiah taunts them by pointing out that although they are experienced in enchantments and sorceries, they still will not withstand God's disaster. Astrology and sorcery were ways to control destiny. Babylon would soon face the truth that it was not in control of its destiny.

With all of their counselors, they weary themselves. They cannot figure a way out of their situation. Their astrologers try to predict an overturning of their fate, but it will not make a difference. Babylon's wisdom and knowledge will not be able to help it. Nothing they take pride in will pull them out of the ditch they dug for themselves through blasphemous pride and wickedness.

This same understanding of reality needs to be imprinted on our own hearts and minds. We are not in control, and any attempt to control our destiny is empty and vain. God is sovereign over our lives, and we need to look to Him for help. He controls our future and our destiny.

How do you respond to the fact that God controls your future and your destiny?

3. The Ultimate Demise of Babylon (vv. 14–15)

The astrologers and sorcerers of Babylon are compared to straw or stubble burning in the fire. They will not be able to save Babylon. Their fate was with the city and its empire. Looking to them for help would be fruitless. Sitting by their fire would bring no warmth. They can't save Babylon because they can't save themselves.

The nations who have dealt with Babylon since its origin will turn their backs on it. They will not help Babylon when calamity strikes. The pride of Babylon will be broken by the sovereign will of God. Babylon will have no way to escape it, no one to turn to, and no resources to meet this disaster.

Where do you turn when you are facing an impossible situation?

Search the Scriptures

1. What is Babylon's declaration of pride (Isaiah 49:10)?
2. What did Babylon rely on in times of disaster (vv. 12–13)?

Discuss the Meaning

1. What are the modern equivalents in our country to Babylon's knowledge and witchcraft? What do we trust in as a nation?
2. Why do people turn to things like astrology and witchcraft?

Liberating Lesson

We may be tempted to despair as we see the world and its leaders walk in pride and wickedness. When it comes to our own nation, hyper-patriotism and blind allegiance has puffed up many with misplaced pride. They believe we as a nation are superior to others and continually progressing toward increasing splendor. Our Scriptures tell us God is in control of the nations. He lifts up some and casts down others. Loyalty

to your country is a good thing but blind loyalty and pride absent of dependence on God is a path to ruin. We may despair at the injustice we see in the world, but God will call the nations to account for their pride and wickedness. Oppressive regimes and unjust laws are a result of human pride. But human pride will always be brought low under the sovereignty of God.

Application for Activation

No nation is beyond the pride we read about in Isaiah's description of Babylon. As individuals, we are equally in danger of exhibiting this kind of pride. In the coming week, take some time to pray for our nation and its leaders. Also make a plan to serve others. This is a surefire way to root out pride in your life.

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

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Say It Correctly

Jotham. JAW-thum.

Ahaz. AYE-hazz.

Manasseh. Mah-NAH-suh.

Antithesis. an-TIH-thuh-siss.

Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY

Babylon's Days Are Numbered
(Jeremiah 29:8–14)

TUESDAY

Let Your Compassion Come Speedily
(Psalm 79)

WEDNESDAY

Persecution Foretold
(Mark 13:1–13)

THURSDAY

Keep Awake!
(Mark 13:28–37)

FRIDAY

Rise Up, O God!
(Psalm 74:10–23)

SATURDAY

The Humiliation of Babylon
(Isaiah 47:1–9)

SUNDAY

No Security in Wickedness
(Isaiah 47:10–15)

Notes

A MISSION TO SAVE

GOD FORETELLS OF REDEMPTION

LESSON AIM:

By the end of the lesson, teens will:

(1) explore the false security they find in people and things; (2) appreciate that all people who serve God are included in God's promises; and (3) create opportunities to praise God for the plan of redemption.

MATERIALS NEEDED

Bible, student magazines, paper, pens, highlighters, an LED candle for each student

OPEN THE LESSON

Invite youth to make a list of things they couldn't live without on paper you've provided. Leave the directions intentionally vague. Once participants have completed their lists, invite them to use highlighters of different colors to indicate which things they literally couldn't live without, which things they wouldn't want to live without, and which things they really could live without if they had to. Discuss why we feel this way about things we own or have.

PRESENT THE SCRIPTURES

In today's Scripture passage, the servant is identified as the source of restoration for the nation of Israel and as the redeemer of the world. Israel was returning back from captivity in Babylon and this second servant song illustrated God's plan to provide hope and redemption. The servant is called from birth and described as demonstrating His power by bringing back the nation to God. He is their salvation. God's children are set apart and called to be a light to the nations. He promises to create a covenant with His people and provide spiritual blessings. Being a light to the nations means to be a symbol of hope in a world full of darkness. The

redemption in verses 5, 10–11 tells that all creation will rejoice with God's children as they are restored and help restore others.

EXPLORE THE MEANING

Have the students read out loud and discuss the story "A Mission to Save," the Scripture passages, and the Scripture Discussion.

Then have the students answer the questions in the Check It and Think It sections to make sure they understand the lesson.

In today's story, Janice was in a hopeless situation but was seen by someone who extended compassion toward her. Her life completely changed as a result. Talk with your students about ways we need others in life. While there is a lot of darkness, we are called to be a light.

NEXT STEPS FOR APPLICATION

In today's lesson, your students learned that God wants to redeem them while remaining compassionate for the lost, hurting, and oppressed. They discovered their part to play in God's plan for redemption.

Provide an LED candle (inexpensive at dollar stores) for each participant. Consider the metaphor in verse 6: "I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth." Invite participants to suggest ways they could live this metaphor to be a light, writing responses on the board or newsprint. Suggest

that participants take the candles with them as a reminder to be light with their lives.

WORSHIP GUIDE

For the Superintendent or Teacher

Theme: God Foretells of Redemption

Theme Song: “Ask of Me – Here I Am”

Scripture: Isaiah 49:1–17

Song: “Everyone Needs Compassion” by Matt Redman

Prayer: God, thank You for having compassion on me and redeeming my soul. Help me to see others through Your lens, and extend grace, love, mercy, and compassion. In Jesus’ name, amen.

FROM THE STUDENT MAGAZINE

A Mission to Save

Janice sat stunned as tears filled her eyes. “I can’t believe it. I’m actually a millionaire!”

Janice had grown up in a bad neighborhood. Both of her parents weren’t around, and her grandmother raised her along with some of her cousins. Janice wasn’t a great student because life was so distracting. She always had to share her space, she didn’t have everything she needed, and there were nights when she went to bed hungry. It’s not that she hated school, it was just that everything was stacked against her.

“She’ll probably just end up pregnant and drop out like the others,” she overheard her guidance counselor say once. She left school and never came back. She felt hopeless.

After dropping out of high school, Janice found a job as a cashier at a gas station. A regular customer, a businesswoman took an interest in her. She could tell Janice was smart and a hard worker, she just needed an opportunity for something better. She offered to hire Janice to work at her company.

Over the years, Janice learned the ins and outs of the business and eventually secured the money needed to branch out and start a

company on her own. Just a couple of years in, Janice hit her goal of making her first million.

It was all possible because a businesswoman recognized her talent and gave her an opportunity.

Scripture Discussion

The Children of Israel learned the hard way. They went from being richly blessed to forgetting God, which ultimately led them into captivity. Israel turned away from God which affected their ability to be a light in the world. Despite their sins, God would redeem them—restore them spiritually. God’s mission did not change; He still wanted His people to be a light to the world and help provide freedom from oppression and captivity. Captives cannot free themselves, so God planned to send the Messiah. The passage today describes the coming Messiah, described by Simeon in Luke 2. He is described as a redeemer for the nation of Israel, but also as a savior for the world. The Messiah is described as the true “Israel” because He will do what the nation could not. Isaiah describes Him both as a temporary king and the timeless Savior.

NOTES

God Foretells Redemption

Bible Background • ISAIAH 49:1-17

Printed Text • ISAIAH 49:1-11 | Devotional Reading • PSALM 111:9-10

Aim for Change

By the end of this lesson, we will UNDERSTAND that God’s mission for the people of Israel is to show all people the way to God, CELEBRATE that all people who serve God are included in God’s promises, and TELL others about God’s never-ending love and salvation for all people.

In Focus

For two centuries, African Americans were slaves with seemingly no hope of deliverance. As they toiled in wretched conditions, they sang songs and prayed prayers, hoping for relief. God heard their cries, and He allowed someone to rise among them. Her name was Harriet Tubman, and she was known as the “Moses” of her people.

Tubman was born in slavery and experienced many hardships. Unlike some who had accepted their lot, she longed for freedom. God did indeed allow her to escape the bonds of slavery. She enjoyed her freedom, but she couldn’t forget her brothers and sisters who were still in bondage. She returned to the South many times and led her people to freedom, just as Moses had done in Egypt for his people.

The slaves were clever. They included coded escape signals in their songs. After dark, “Steal Away” was the song used to signal slaves to move to a meeting place from which to escape to the North via the Underground Railroad. Harriet Tubman helped more than 300 slaves escape to freedom this way. And though she only delivered relatively few from the bonds of slavery, her heroic deeds focused attention on the need for emancipation. Moses, Harriet Tubman, Martin Luther King Jr., and others were powerful leaders led by God. Each came to lead a particular people at a particular time. However, Jesus came for ALL people and His great work has and will be felt through all eternity.

How have you helped spread the Word of God’s deliverance to all people?

Keep in Mind

“Thus saith the LORD, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages.” (Isaiah 49:8, KJV)

Focal Verses

KJV **Isaiah 49:1** Listen, O isles, unto me; and hearken, ye people, from far; The LORD hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name.

2 And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me, and made me a polished shaft; in his quiver hath he hid me;

3 And said unto me, Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified.

4 Then I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain: yet surely my judgment is with the LORD, and my work with my God.

5 And now, saith the LORD that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the LORD, and my God shall be my strength.

6 And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles,

that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.

7 Thus saith the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel, and his Holy One, to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers, Kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the LORD that is faithful, and the Holy One of Israel, and he shall choose thee.

8 Thus saith the LORD, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages;

9 That thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves. They shall feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places.

10 They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them.

11 And I will make all my mountains a way, and my highways shall be exalted.

The People, Places, and Times

The Suffering Servant. Arising out of the complex prophecies of Isaiah, this enigmatic figure serves God and will suffer for others (see Isaiah 42:1–4; 49:1–7; 50:4–11; 52:13–53:12). In their original context, these passages attempt to explain the harsh suffering the Israelites would pass through during their exile.

One song explicitly identifies the servant as Israel (Isaiah 49:3). But the servant was also said to be God's perfect Servant, which can only be Jesus. This paradigm makes sense of the most difficult aspect of the Jesus tradition—His suffering. Equally important, it pointed to

the Gentiles as the object of God's healing and forgiveness alongside the Jews.

Background

God instructed His prophet, Isaiah, to write concerning Israel's captivity in Babylon. For seventy years, the nation suffered under this oppression. Then the Lord allowed them to return to Jerusalem. He gave them the resources to rebuild the Temple and establish themselves once again as God's representative.

But the Israelites got comfortable in Babylon. They became accustomed to the Babylonian ways and their gods. Most of the Israelites

refused to move. Only a small remnant traveled back to Judah.

God speaks through Isaiah about these upcoming problems (Isaiah 48). In the first part of the chapter, he rebukes their negative attitudes and behaviors. However, God changes His tone in the last half of the chapter. In several of the later chapters of Isaiah, the Lord offers hope and help with the promise of the Messiah's coming. Like a loving mother attempting to get her cranky toddler to take a nap, the Father begins to speak softly. He highlighted promises about a coming Savior, Jesus, to save Israel and the entire world.

Are you willing to move forward on God's promises? Or are you staying behind, enjoying Babylonian, worldly comforts?

At-A-Glance

1. The Servant's Call and Mission (Isaiah 49:1–7)
2. The Servant Saves and Restores (vv. 8–11)

In Depth

1. The Servant's Call and Mission (Isaiah 49:1–7)

In the book of Isaiah, four passages are called “the Servant Songs” (Isaiah 42–50). The second song found here outlines the coming Messiah's mission on earth. Jesus, God's redeemer, brings light, healing, and restoration. He offers His salvation promises to the Jewish people and the entire world.

God speaks through the Messiah in the first person. He asks for listening ears. His calling started in the womb of His mother. Before the Holy Spirit placed Jesus' embryo in Mary's body, the angel said, His name is Jesus, the Savior of all humanity (Luke 1:31).

Isaiah compared Jesus' mouth, His words, to instruments of war. The well-polished sword and the shaft pierces the intended target. God kept Jesus out of the main limelight until a particular time in history. At the appointed time, He introduced the Savior and His penetrating message (Galatians 4:4–5).

Isaiah calls the Servant, whom we now understand to be the Messiah, by the name Israel. This nation originally carried God's salvation message. When the Jewish people rebelled, the Messiah picked up the baton, committed to completing God's assignment.

God called Jesus to draw back the Israelites to Jehovah. God raised Him and gave Him the might and power to carry out the task. The first Christian missionaries and the authors of the Bible were Jewish people, God's instruments to introduce salvation to the world. The Servant fulfilled the covenant God made with the Israelites, and He is the actual covenant. Some of the Jewish people pushed Jesus aside, denying His claim as Messiah. They looked down upon Him, calling Him unclean, a liar. However, God viewed Him as valuable and deemed worthy of praise (1 Peter 2:4).

Jesus respected those in positions of authority in the secular government and within the Jewish religion. But both plotted against Him. When Jesus returns to the earth for the second time, He will be honored and worshiped. Rulers and every human being will prostrate before Him (Philippians 2:10–11).

How did Jesus complete the work that Israel was supposed to do?

2. The Servant Saves and Restores (vv. 8–11)

Jehovah heard the prayer of the Servant and helped Him fulfill a fruitful ministry. God is committed to lifting this universe out of its critical condition, placing His Spirit in desolate, godless places. His desire is for the

entire human race to know the truth through His Son Jesus.

God frees captives. God freed the captives in Babylon, and He offers freedom to all humanity bound in sin. It is now possible to bask in the presence of a Holy God—no sin hinders or divides (Isaiah 61:1).

Messiah bids everyone come openly to the light. Christ found the Jews enslaved to the law, covered in the darkness, and separated from God. Christ lifted their burdens. The Compassionate Shepherd is always leading to greener pastures. Jesus keeps His sheep away from the scorching sun, leads them to lush feeding grounds and fresh water. Even in places that are downtrodden and barren—God provides for His sheep.

These promises are not only for the Jewish nation or people in biblical days. Jesus still saves and restores anyone willing to come to Him.

In a letter to the Corinthians, Paul references these verses and explains that “today is the day of salvation” (2 Corinthians 6:2). How does this affect our reading of Isaiah?

Search the Scriptures

1. Use the Scripture verses in Isaiah 49:1–11 to describe the characteristics and mission of the Lord’s servant. (Example characteristics, v. 1 called before birth, v. 2 words of judgment are sharp, v. 3 a Servant; Example mission points: v. 1 wants people in distant and faraway lands to listen, v. 4 work seems useless)

2. In verse 1, Isaiah addresses the “isles,” meaning a place far, far away from him. What expression would we use today to confer this understanding?

Discuss the Meaning

The Scriptures clearly state Jesus’ job description. He came to seek and save humanity. His death on the Cross allowed freedom from the bondage of sin. This lesson reminds

Christians that the Savior is light out of darkness, He restores and is our Shepherd to lead us into His beautiful pastures. Think about the past couple weeks. How have you seen Jesus do this in your life? What kinds of people or things have you or others turned to instead of Christ to foster a better life?

Liberating Lesson

The word “servant” does not always sit well with African Americans. It rakes up pictures in our minds of Black people as slaves or only getting a job as a maid, driver, or butler. Yet, when the word “servant” is used in the Bible, God desires for Christians to have a different picture. Jesus came to serve all humanity. He, too, was mistreated and unappreciated. But He kept placing Himself in God’s protective hands, being assured of God’s watchful eye.

Get alone with God and express any anger or hostility you may feel about the mistreatment of people of color. Ask God to begin a transformation in your heart about how to be a true servant.

Application for Activation

Many individuals today continuously wonder, “What about me? What about me?” God saw the need for salvation. He sent Jesus to meet that need in our world, and Jesus completed God’s assignment. As Christians, we are to answer the same call. Pray for more sensitivity to the Holy Spirit as we go through our daily activities. How can I help those around me foster the same attitude and be less selfish and self-centered?

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

Sources:

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- Oswalt, John N. *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40–66*. New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998.
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Say It Correctly

Enigmatic. eh-nig-MAH-tik.
Eunuch. YOU-nik.

Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY

God's Redemption Defies
Human Wisdom
(1 Corinthians 1:18–25)

TUESDAY

Righteousness, Sanctification,
and Redemption
(1 Corinthians 1:26–31)

WEDNESDAY

God Sent Redemption to God's People
(Psalm 111)

THURSDAY

Christ Brings Eternal Redemption
(Hebrews 9:11–14)

FRIDAY

Pardon My Guilt, O Lord
(Psalm 25:1–11)

SATURDAY

Redeem Israel, O God
(Psalm 25:12–22)

SUNDAY

The Lord Will Have Compassion
(Isaiah 49:1–11)

Notes
