

vv8-9 In the context, God forgives sinners because he doesn't think like man does. That his thoughts are higher than ours is evident in the fact that he sent his Son (the Servant) to suffer and die for the sins of the people.

vv8-9 "Most people have difficulty truly forgiving those who wrong them, but God is willing to love the most unlovely and ungodly, even forgive those who do unforgivable evil against others and blaspheme the name of God. In fact, he planned to cause the suffering Servant to die so that many sinful people might live" (Smith 2009: 510).

vv10-11 "Specifically, in the immediate context God is assuring the audience about the availability of forgiveness to all who come to him and repent (cf. 55:7). God's commitment that he will respond with compassion to all who seek him is a promise they can count on" (Smith 2009: 510).

vv12-13 With a picture like this, God is trying to excite the imagination. He is trying to woo his creation to himself. This should not only beckon the sinner but it should strengthen the weary faithful. God could have said the same thing in boring, plain language but it would not be fair to the fulfillment he has in store.

v13 "This work of redemption will stand for all eternity as a witness to the nature of our God" (Oswalt 1998: 448).

"The fulfillment of all these eschatological promises will not fully be realized until a later date, but just knowing what God has prepared for those who love him makes today's trials seem less severe and very temporal" (Smith 2009: 513).

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

If you were **absolutely certain** that God's Word was true, how would your life be different?

How does this chapter reflect the gospel as we know it? Is anything missing?

How do promises of the future impact your life today?

For further study, compare this chapter with Jeremiah 2:13; John 4:10-14; 6:68; 7:37-38; Acts 13:34; 17:27; Rom 11:33-36; 2 Cor 9:10; Rev 21:6; 22:17.

ISAIAH 55: THE GREAT INVITATION

STRUCTURE OF ISAIAH 49-55

Servant song (#2)	49:1-13
Salvation for Zion	49:14-50:3
Servant song (#3)	50:4-11
Salvation for Zion	51:1-52:12
Servant song (#4)	52:13-53:12
Salvation for Zion	54:1-17
Conclusion: Invitation	55:1-13 (adapted from Smith 2009: 337)

OUTLINE OF ISAIAH 55

- I. Invitation to come to God and enjoy all his promises (55:1-5)
 - A. Invitation to accept God's free gift of life (55:1-3a)
 - B. The promises of the everlasting covenant based upon the Messiah's faithfulness (55:3b-5)
- II. Invitation to repent because God's word is true (55:6-11)
 - A. Invitation to turn from sin and to God (55:6-7)
 - B. God's word is true: he forgives sinners (55:8-9)
 - C. God's word is true: he accomplishes all his purposes (55:10-11)
- III. Promise of kingdom blessings for the forgiven (55:12-13)

SOURCES CITED

J. Alec Motyer, *Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary*, TOTC, 1999.
John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66*, NICOT, 1998
Gary V. Smith, *Isaiah 40-66*, New American Commentary, 2009.

NOTES

Isaiah 1:18–20 “Come now, let us reason together,” says the LORD. “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool. If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the best from the land; but if you resist and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword.” For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.

God has made promises to his people and because his words are never just “well meaning” but they always accomplish their purpose exactly, he will redeem his people. But he does not redeem those who hate him and thus he pleads with his people yet again to turn to him in order to enjoy the fulfillment of his promises. In the next chapter, we will see that the offer extends not only to Israel but to foreigners as well.

This chapter fits very well within the context of the book. It’s true that Isaiah has been giving some prophecies that would not be fulfilled for some time, and they could have known that given the mentions of Babylon, but the revelation of the future only served to strengthen the invitation in the present day (and to all future readers): trust in God now. Surrender your life now. Come and drink and be satisfied.

“Now he moves from the descriptive mode [ch 54] to the prescriptive mode [ch 55], calling Israel to receive what is now hers to have. Vv. 1–7 have 12 imperative or jussive verbs, by means of which the prophet implores Israel not to miss what God has for her” (Oswalt 1998: 433).

The one who seeks God is the one who says with David, I would rather have you than a rich banquet. But the one who seeks God gets both God and the rich banquet.

“The only thing that they must do is to accept the sin offering that the Servant has made (in prospect) and receive the mercy of God that that offering entails. If they do this, they are indeed able to be the servants of God in the world, a position toward which the book has been looking at least since ch. 2” (Oswalt 1998: 434-35).

Two qualifications: recognized need, recognized dependence. I need it; I can’t earn it.

“The first invitation, *Come to the waters*, underlines a life-threatening need and an abundant supply. The second invitation, *come, buy and eat*,

extended to the one who has *no money*, highlights inability and helplessness: on the one hand, how can one without money *buy*? But, on the other hand, nothing can be had without payment (*buy*). Someone—in context, by implication, the Servant in his saving efficacy—has paid the purchase price. The third invitation, *Come, buy wine and milk, without money*, stresses the richness of the provision: not just the water of bare necessity but the wine and milk of luxurious satisfaction” (Motyer 1999: 387).

v3 “In this eschatological setting one would expect a reference to the future Davidic Messiah whose role was to establish justice (9:7; 42:1–4), bring back Israel to God (49:5), bring salvation to the ends of the earth (49:6), and bear the sins of many (53:4–5,10–12). Through his faithful acts of lovingkindness he himself will be a covenant to the people (42:6; 49:8). His faithfulness to the plan of God are extensively reviewed in the servant songs, and because of his faithful love Israelites and people from the nations will be declared just and many will enter a new relationship with God” (Smith 2009: 502).

vv6-13 “The last part of this chapter continues the call for people to respond to God’s challenge so that they might enjoy the blessings promised in chap. 54 and be a part of the covenant community that will benefit from the everlasting covenant God will confirm through the faithful, sure, and loving deeds of the Davidic royal servant (55:3–5)” (Smith 2009: 506).

v6 “In Deut 4:29 God told the Israelites that if the people “seek the Lord your God, you will find him, if you look for him with all your heart” (cf. Jer 29:13). Seeking to get into contact with God involves calling on him, praying to him, and developing a relationship with him” (Smith 2009: 507-8).

vv8-13 “It may seem that God should be unable to offer restoration to wicked people and that it would be futile to seek the Lord as the prophet is urging, but he says we should do it anyway (vv. 6–7) because: (1) our understanding is not the measure of what God can do (vv. 8–9); (2) God’s word is absolutely dependable (vv. 10–11); and (3) God promises wonderful results (vv. 12–13)” (Oswalt 1998: 434).

vv8-9 “This is a verse of very wide application, covering every aspect of life. It cancels the useless and debilitating question ‘Why?’ in face of life’s difficulties; it opens the door to the blessed reality of faith in a God who is truly God. In context its focus is narrower.” (Motyer 1999: 390).