

# Read the Whole Bible with Pastor

## **Monday (March 18) – Isaiah 42**

After many chapters pronouncing judgment, the latter chapters of Isaiah are brimming with hope and comfort. This shift that began abruptly in Chapter 40 continues here. But now Isaiah speaks of the reason that we sinners can hope for mercy: “Behold! My Servant...” All of the Old Testament has been one prophecy after another about the coming Messiah. Now Isaiah reveals something previously unknown about Jesus: He will come, not in power, but in humility. “He will not cry out, nor raise His voice, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street” (v. 2). This theme will be taken up in much greater detail in Chapter 53.

## **Tuesday (March 19) – Isaiah 43, 44**

Chapter 42 ends with the question, “Was it not the LORD, He against whom we have sinned?” This is a confession that we rightly deserve God’s wrath and punishment. But Chapter 43 begins with a beautiful statement of gospel: “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; You are mine.” In Holy Baptism God has called you by name and declared that you are His possession. This is a great comfort to the troubled conscience!

God continues with His wonderful promises in Chapter 44, speaking of a coming day when He will pour out His Spirit (v. 3)—the day of Pentecost. In verse 22 God declares: “I have blotted out, like a thick cloud, your transgressions, and like a cloud, your sins.”

## **Wednesday (March 20) – Isaiah 45, 46**

Isaiah lived some 150 years before Cyrus comes to power over the Persian Empire. Yet, the Holy Spirit causes Isaiah to write of Cyrus by name, calling Him God’s “anointed.” Cyrus, according to the will and foreknowledge of God, will issue the decree instructing the Jews to return from exile and rebuild the temple (See Ezra 6:3–5). But unbelieving scholars conclude that Isaiah 45 must have been written by someone other than Isaiah, someone who lived during Cyrus’ lifetime and knew his name. Unbelievers simply cannot believe that God knows the future and ordains the decrees of kings long before they happen.

Bel and Nebo (46:1) are two false gods of the Babylonians/Chaldeans. When Isaiah writes this, Babylon is the mightiest empire in the world. Its gods are thought to be invincible, and soon God’s people will be taken into captivity in Babylon. But Isaiah prophesies of the day when Babylon will be destroyed, its idols unable to save or protect (see Daniel 5:30–31).

## **Thursday (March 21) – Isaiah 47, 48**

In Chapter 47 God continues to speak judgment upon Babylon. Even though He will use Babylon as His instrument to punish His idolatrous people, Babylon too will face God’s judgment. God can and does use one sinful nation to punish another, but everything that happens in this world is for the sake of His people, the Church. And even before the people of Judah have gone into captivity, God speaks of His plan to restore them: “Go forth from Babylon! Flee from the Chaldeans! ... The Lord has redeemed His servant Jacob’ ” (48:20).

## **Friday (March 22) – Isaiah 49, 50**

In the latter chapters of Isaiah, the Holy Spirit begins to speak more and more directly of Christ. “[The Lord] formed Me from the womb to be His Servant” (49:5). “I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands” (49:16)—a reference to the crucifixion and the marks of the nails. “I gave My back to those who struck Me, and My cheeks to those who plucked out the beard (50:6)” —a reference to the flogging and shameful treatment of Jesus.

## **Saturday (March 23) – Isaiah 51, 52**

God continues to speak of the coming day in which He will comfort Zion (51:3). His salvation (the person of Jesus) is near (51:5). God speaks of how He will redeem His people: “You have sold yourselves for nothing, and you shall be redeemed without money” (52:3). To “redeem” means to buy back, similar to how one pays money to “redeem” an item from a pawn shop. Jesus redeemed us from the hand of Satan, “not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death” (*Small Catechism*).

## **Sunday (March 24) – Isaiah 53, 54, 55**

Beginning with the final three verses of Chapter 52 and continuing through all of Chapter 53, we find the most beautiful yet terrible description of our Lord’s suffering and death for our sakes. Now the theme of the Suffering Servant, which has been hinted at here and there in Isaiah’s prophecy, is fully revealed. “Who has believed our report?” (53:1). The answer is: no one—apart from the work of the Holy Spirit. God’s plan of salvation, His plan to win by losing, to conquer death by dying, is utterly inconceivable to the natural mind. “By His stripes we are healed” (53:5) is a reference to the marks left behind by the lashes our Lord received. “They made His grave with the wicked—but with the rich at His death” (53:9) speaks of Joseph of Arimathea, the rich man who buried Jesus in His own tomb. Perhaps the most poignant of all is “It pleased the LORD to bruise Him” (53:10). Such is God’s love toward you, that it pleased Him to bruise (crush) His own beloved Son! The death of Christ was not an accident. It did not result from the scheming of the Jews, the cruelty of the Romans, or the machinations of the devil. It happened because God the Father willed it. He did so for the sake of us poor sinners.

Chapters 54 and 55 are written in light of the events of Chapter 53. They are filled with the joy, hope, and promise that is ours only because of what Jesus accomplished upon His cross. “Sing, O barren, you who have not borne! Break forth with joy and singing! (54:1). “For your Maker is your husband, the LORD of hosts is His name; and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel” (54:5). In Chapter 55 God invites us to come dine at His table, even though we do not deserve His bounty: “Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price” (55:1). How amazing is the love of God, that He sets this rich feast for us undeserving sinners! Truly it is cause to break forth into joy and singing. God has sent His Suffering Servant to visit and redeem His people. Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!