

The Book of Isaiah, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 24: Arise, Shine; the New Heavens and New Earth

Isaiah 60:1–66:24

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

This lesson is the grand finale of the entire study, and the teacher should let it rise to a hope-filled climax. After twenty-three lessons, help the class lift their eyes to the risen light of Christ over Zion and feel the sweep of God's purpose coming to completion. The aim is for every student to walk out not merely informed about Isaiah's last chapters but moved to arise and shine, and to name how the whole journey through the prophet has formed them. Keep the brightness of the promises and the sobering final note of judgment held together, exactly as Isaiah does, so the hope is honest and the worship is reverent.

Doctrinally, this is a sensitive lesson that must be handled with great care. Present Arise, shine (60:1) and the Spirit-anointed ministry of 61:1–2 as fulfilled in Christ, the church, and the gospel age, anchored in Jesus' own claim in Luke 4. Present the new heavens and new earth (65:17, 66:22) as fulfilled in the people God forms in Christ and the gospel age, and finally consummated in the eternal state (2 Peter 3:13, Revelation 21), never as an earthly millennial reign, a rebuilt temple with restored sacrifices, or a political kingdom centered on present-day Jerusalem. The true Zion is the heavenly Jerusalem, the church of the living God (Hebrews 12:22–23, Galatians 4:26). End on God's heart for the humble and contrite (66:2) and the new name, while soberly honoring the closing word on judgment (66:24).

Question 1

Student Question:

In Isaiah 60:1–3, the glory of the LORD rises on Zion and nations come to its light. In the New Testament, this light has dawned in Christ, and His people shine with His light to the world (John 8:12, Matthew 5:14–16). What does it mean that the church's light is borrowed rather than self-generated, and how does that guard us from both pride and despair about our witness?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Chapter 60 opens with one of the most stirring commands in Scripture: "Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you." The verb tense is striking. The light has already come; the glory has already risen. The command is simply to get up and reflect what is already shining.

The chapter unfolds a glorious scene. While darkness covers the earth and thick darkness the peoples, the LORD rises upon His people and His glory is seen on them. Nations come to the light and kings to the brightness of the rising. The gates stand open continually, and the wealth of the nations flows in. It is a picture of God's people as a radiant city drawing the world.

The New Testament shows us how to read this. The light is Christ, the light of the world (John 8:12), and His people now shine with His reflected light (Matthew 5:14–16). The gathering of the nations to Zion's light is fulfilled in the gospel going to all peoples and the church drawn from every nation. This is not a future earthly Jerusalem ascendant over the nations politically; it is the spreading light of Christ through the gospel age.

Teachers should stress that the church's light is borrowed, not self-generated. We shine only because the glory of the LORD has risen upon us. This guards us from pride, since the light is not our own, and from despair, since the light does not depend on our brightness but on Christ's. Our task is simply to arise and reflect Him.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The light has already come in Christ; the command is to arise and reflect it (Isaiah 60:1).
- The light is Christ, and His people shine with His reflected, borrowed light (John 8:12, Matthew 5:14–16).
- The gathering of nations to Zion's light is fulfilled in the gospel going to all peoples, not an earthly political Jerusalem.
- A borrowed light guards us from both pride and despair about our witness.

Discussion Prompts

- What does it mean that the church's light is borrowed rather than self-generated?
- Where have you been waiting to feel different before you arise and walk in the light Christ has given?
- How does the gathering of the nations to the light shape our view of the gospel's reach?

Question 2

Student Question:

Isaiah 60:1 simply commands, "Arise, shine." Where in your own life have you been sitting in darkness that Christ has already dispelled, waiting to feel different before you get up and walk in the light He has given?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Chapter 60 continues with images of transformation. Bronze is replaced with gold, iron with silver, and violence is no longer heard in the land; the walls are called Salvation and the gates Praise. Then verses 19 and 20 soar: "The sun shall be no more your light by day, nor for brightness shall the moon give you light, but the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory."

This image of God Himself as the everlasting light, replacing sun and moon, reappears at the very end of the Bible in Revelation 21:23, where the new Jerusalem has no need of sun or moon, for the glory of God gives it light and the Lamb is its lamp. Isaiah is sketching from a distance what John will see up close.

The teacher should let the class hear the resonance between Isaiah's vision and Revelation's new Jerusalem. This is a strong clue that Isaiah's restored Zion finds its fulfillment not in a rebuilt physical city but in the redeemed people of God, brought to final glory in the eternal state.

Verse 22 ends with a promise about timing: "I am the LORD; in its time I will hasten it." God's purposes unfold on His schedule, neither early nor late, and He pledges to bring them about. The radiant city is certain because God Himself guarantees it.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God Himself becomes the everlasting light of His people, replacing sun and moon (Isaiah 60:19–20).
- This vision reappears in the new Jerusalem of Revelation 21:23, lit by God's glory and the Lamb.
- Isaiah's restored Zion finds fulfillment in the redeemed people of God, not a rebuilt physical city.
- God guarantees His purposes and brings them about in His own time (Isaiah 60:22).

Discussion Prompts

- What does it stir in you to imagine God Himself as your everlasting light?
- How does the link to Revelation 21 shape how you read Isaiah's vision of Zion?
- Where do you need to trust God's timing for a promise you are still waiting on?

Question 3

Student Question:

Isaiah 61:1–2 says, "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me... to bring good news to the poor... to proclaim liberty to the captives." Jesus read this in the synagogue and declared it fulfilled in Himself (Luke 4:16–21). How does Jesus' use of this text show us that Isaiah's promises of restoration are fulfilled in His ministry and the gospel age, rather than in a future earthly political program?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Isaiah 61:1–2 is among the most important texts in the book, because Jesus Himself claimed it. "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor."

In Luke 4:16–21, Jesus stands in the synagogue at Nazareth, reads this passage, rolls up the scroll, and declares, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." He is the Anointed One, the Messiah, on whom the Spirit rests, sent to preach good news to the poor and free the captives. The whole sweep of Isaiah's restoration hope lands on Jesus.

This is decisive for how we read all of Isaiah's restoration promises. They are fulfilled in the ministry of Christ and the gospel age, not in a future earthly political program. The liberty proclaimed is freedom from sin, the captives released are those bound by sin and death, and the year of the LORD's favor is the gospel era now open to all. Notice that Jesus stopped reading before the line about the day of vengeance, signaling that the present age is the time of favor.

Teachers should help the class feel the weight of Jesus' claim. Every prophet pointed forward; here is the One who stood up and said, this is about me, today. The restoration Israel longed for arrived not as a rebuilt kingdom of David's throne in Jerusalem but as the kingdom of God breaking in through the Anointed One.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Jesus claimed Isaiah 61:1–2 as fulfilled in Himself in the synagogue at Nazareth (Luke 4:16–21).
- Isaiah's restoration promises are fulfilled in Christ's ministry and the gospel age, not a future earthly political program.
- The liberty proclaimed is freedom from sin and death, and the year of favor is the gospel era now open to all.
- Jesus stopping before the day of vengeance signals that the present age is the time of God's favor.

Discussion Prompts

- How does Jesus' use of Isaiah 61 in Luke 4 shape the way you read all of Isaiah's restoration promises?
- What does it mean to you personally that Christ came to bind up the brokenhearted and free the captives?
- Why is it significant that Jesus stopped reading before the day of vengeance?

Question 4

Student Question:

Isaiah 61:3 says God gives "a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit." What ashes, mourning, or faintness are you carrying that you have not yet handed to the God who delights to exchange them for beauty and praise?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Isaiah 61 continues with one of the great exchanges of Scripture. To those who mourn in Zion, God gives "a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit" (61:3). God takes what is broken and trades it for beauty.

Ashes in the ancient world were the sign of mourning and grief, smeared on the head in sorrow. God promises to replace the ashes with a crown of beauty, the mourning with the oil of

gladness, the faint and drooping spirit with a garment of praise. This is the work of the Anointed One among the brokenhearted.

The teacher should note how concrete and tender this is. God does not merely remove the grief; He replaces it with something better. The mourners become “oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he may be glorified.” Out of ashes, God grows sturdy trees that display His glory.

Pastorally, this invites the class to bring their actual ashes to God. Many carry grief, faintness, and mourning they have never handed over. The promise is not that God ignores these but that He delights to exchange them. The question is whether we will give Him the ashes.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God exchanges ashes for beauty, mourning for gladness, faintness for praise (Isaiah 61:3).
- God does not merely remove grief but replaces it with something better.
- The mourners become oaks of righteousness that display God’s glory (Isaiah 61:3).
- The invitation is to bring our actual grief and faintness to God rather than carry it alone.

Discussion Prompts

- What ashes, mourning, or faintness are you still carrying that you have not handed to God?
- Why is it significant that God replaces grief rather than merely removing it?
- What would it look like to become an oak of righteousness that displays God’s glory?

Question 5

Student Question:

Isaiah 61:10 rejoices that God “has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness.” How does the picture of being clothed in a righteousness we did not earn shape a right understanding of how we are saved, and how does this differ from trying to dress ourselves in our own goodness?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Isaiah 61:10 bursts into song: “I will greatly rejoice in the LORD; my soul shall exult in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.”

The picture is of being clothed by God in salvation and righteousness. The righteousness is described as a robe God puts on us, not a garment we weave ourselves. This anticipates the New Testament truth that the believer is clothed with Christ and counted righteous through Him, not through self-made goodness.

This stands in sharp contrast to 64:6, where the people confess that their own righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. The only clothing fit for God’s presence is the robe He provides. We come not in the rags of our own righteousness but in the robe God gives.

Teachers should help the class see how this shapes a right understanding of salvation. We are saved by grace through faith, clothed in a righteousness we did not earn. Yet this is not faith-only passivity; in Christ we put on this robe in obedient faith, having been clothed with Christ in baptism (Galatians 3:27). The robe is God's gift, received in the way He appointed, not a wage we collect for our goodness.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God clothes His people with salvation and a robe of righteousness we did not earn (Isaiah 61:10).
- This contrasts with our own righteous deeds, which are like a polluted garment (Isaiah 64:6).
- We are clothed with Christ, counted righteous through Him, not through self-made goodness (Galatians 3:27).
- The robe is God's gift received in obedient faith, not a wage collected for our goodness.

Discussion Prompts

- How does being clothed in a righteousness we did not earn shape your understanding of salvation?
- Where are you tempted to dress yourself in your own goodness before God?
- What does it mean to you that the robe of righteousness is God's gift rather than your achievement?

Question 6

Student Question:

Isaiah 62:2-4 promises God's people a new name; no longer Forsaken and Desolate, but "My Delight Is in Her" and "Married." Revelation 2:17 promises the faithful a new name as well. What old name or label do you still answer to that God wants to replace, and what would it mean to live as someone in whom God delights?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Chapter 62 is filled with the language of a new identity. "You shall be called by a new name that the mouth of the LORD will give... You shall no more be termed Forsaken, and your land shall no more be termed Desolate, but you shall be called My Delight Is in Her, and your land Married" (62:2-4).

The old names, Forsaken and Desolate, were names of shame and abandonment. God replaces them with names of delight and belonging. The shift is staggering: from a people God seemed to have left to a people in whom God Himself takes delight, as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride.

The promise of a new name echoes forward to Revelation 2:17, where the faithful are promised a white stone with a new name written on it. A new name in Scripture marks a new identity and a new relationship. God renames His people according to His love for them, not according to their failures.

Teachers should press the personal application. Many in the class still answer to old names: failure, unwanted, unforgiven, not enough. God's word here is that He gives a new name to those who are His. To live as someone in whom God delights is to let His naming, not our shame, define us.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God replaces the names of shame, Forsaken and Desolate, with names of delight and belonging (Isaiah 62:2-4).
- A new name in Scripture marks a new identity and relationship, echoed in Revelation 2:17.
- God renames His people according to His love, not according to their failures.
- To live as someone in whom God delights is to let His naming define us, not our old shame.

Discussion Prompts

- What old name or label do you still answer to that God wants to replace?
- What would it mean to live as someone in whom God genuinely delights?
- How does it help to know God renames us according to His love rather than our failures?

Question 7

Student Question:

Isaiah 63:1-6 pictures a lone figure coming from Edom with garments stained red, treading the winepress of God's judgment alone. How does this sobering image of God's righteous judgment keep the bright promises of these chapters from becoming sentimental, and why must the gospel of grace always be set against the reality of judgment?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Chapter 63 opens with a startling and sobering image. A figure comes from Edom, from Bozrah, in crimson garments, splendid in his apparel, marching in the greatness of his strength. When asked why his garments are red, he answers, "I have trodden the winepress alone, and from the peoples no one was with me." It is a picture of God's righteous judgment, executed alone.

This image of treading the winepress reappears in Revelation 14 and 19 in connection with God's final judgment. The crimson is the blood of the winepress of His wrath against persistent rebellion. The same God who exchanges ashes for beauty also treads the winepress of judgment, and the two truths must be held together.

The teacher should use this passage to keep the bright promises of these chapters from drifting into sentimentality. A gospel that speaks only of beauty and gladness and never of judgment is not Isaiah's gospel. The light that gladdens the redeemed also exposes those who turn away. Grace is precious precisely because judgment is real.

Note as well that God treads the winepress alone, just as the Servant suffered alone and just as, in the deepest sense, Christ alone bore what we could not. There is a solitude to God's saving and judging work that underscores its costliness and its sufficiency.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God's righteous judgment is real and is pictured in the lone treader of the winepress (Isaiah 63:1–6).
- This image reappears in the final judgment scenes of Revelation 14 and 19.
- The bright promises must be held together with the reality of judgment, or the gospel becomes sentimental.
- Grace is precious precisely because judgment against persistent rebellion is real.

Discussion Prompts

- How does the image of God treading the winepress keep these bright chapters from becoming sentimental?
- Why must the gospel of grace always be set against the reality of judgment?
- How does holding judgment and grace together deepen your gratitude for salvation?

Question 8

Student Question:

Isaiah 64:6 confesses, "We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment." When you are tempted to lean on your own righteous deeds before God, how does this honest confession redirect you to depend wholly on His mercy?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Chapters 63 and 64 contain a great prayer of confession and longing. The people remember God's past mercies, grieve over their rebellion, and cry out, "Oh that you would rend the heavens and come down" (64:1). Then comes one of the most honest verses in Scripture: "We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment" (64:6).

This is a stunning admission. Not only are the people's sins polluted; even their righteous deeds, their best efforts at goodness, are like a filthy garment before a holy God. This guards against any thought that we can accumulate enough good works to stand on our own merit before Him.

The teacher should be careful here. This honest confession of personal sin is the people owning their own iniquity, consistent with personal accountability, not a doctrine of inherited guilt or total depravity that would deny human responsibility. The point is that we cannot save ourselves by our own righteousness, which is exactly why we need the robe God provides in 61:10.

Verse 8 turns to hope: "But now, O LORD, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand." Having confessed that their own righteousness is worthless, the people throw themselves on the Father who shapes them. This is the right posture: honest about our deeds, dependent on His mercy.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Even our best righteous deeds are like a polluted garment before a holy God (Isaiah 64:6).
- This is honest confession of personal sin, consistent with personal accountability, not inherited guilt or total depravity.
- We cannot save ourselves by our own righteousness, which is why we need the robe God provides.
- The right posture is honesty about our deeds and dependence on the Father as the potter (Isaiah 64:8).

Discussion Prompts

- When you are tempted to lean on your own righteous deeds, how does Isaiah 64:6 redirect you?
- How is this confession different from a teaching that denies all human responsibility?
- What does it mean to come to God as clay in the potter's hand?

Question 9

Student Question:

Isaiah 65:17 and 66:22 promise, "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth," with no more weeping, no more labor in vain, and even the wolf and the lamb feeding together (65:25). The New Testament shows this fulfilled in the people God forms in Christ and the gospel age, and finally in the eternal new heavens and new earth (2 Peter 3:13, Revelation 21), with the true Zion being the heavenly Jerusalem, the church of the living God (Hebrews 12:22-23, Galatians 4:26), not a future earthly millennial reign or rebuilt temple with restored sacrifices. Trace how this promise begins now in Christ and is consummated in eternity, and why it matters that we read it this way rather than as an earthly political kingdom centered on the present city of Jerusalem.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the doctrinal climax of the lesson and a fitting crown for the whole study. In Isaiah 65:17 God declares, "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind." The same promise is repeated in 66:22. God is not merely repairing the old order; He is making everything new.

The vision that follows is breathtaking: no more weeping or distress, no more infant mortality, no building houses for others to seize, no laboring in vain, and the wolf and the lamb feeding together while the lion eats straw like the ox (65:19-25). It is a picture of a renewed creation where the curse is undone and God's people dwell in unbroken joy and peace.

Here the teacher must guide the class with great care, because this passage has been badly misread. The new heavens and new earth are not an earthly millennial reign, not a rebuilt temple with restored animal sacrifices, and not a political kingdom centered on the present city of Jerusalem. To return to literal temple sacrifices would deny the finished work of Christ, who offered one sacrifice for sins forever (Hebrews 10). The kingdom was established at Pentecost, and Christ reigns now (Acts 2).

The right reading is layered. This renewing work begins now in the people God forms in Christ, for if anyone is in Christ he is a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17). It unfolds through the whole gospel age as the church, the true Zion, lives as God's renewed people. And it is finally consummated in the eternal new heavens and new earth that Peter and John also saw, in which righteousness dwells (2 Peter 3:13, Revelation 21). The true Zion is not the earthly city but the heavenly Jerusalem, the church of the living God (Hebrews 12:22–23, Galatians 4:26).

Teachers should let this land as the hope-filled climax of the entire study. From the holy, holy, holy of chapter 6 to the new heavens and new earth of chapter 65, Isaiah has been leading us to this: a God who makes all things new, whose people dwell forever in His light. Reading it as fulfilled in Christ, the church, and the eternal state rather than as an earthly political program keeps the hope anchored where Scripture anchors it, in the risen Christ and the heavenly Jerusalem, and lets the promise carry its full weight of glory.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God creates new heavens and a new earth, making all things new, not merely repairing the old (Isaiah 65:17, 66:22).
- This is not an earthly millennial reign, a rebuilt temple with restored sacrifices, or a political kingdom centered on present-day Jerusalem.
- Restored animal sacrifices would deny the finished, once-for-all work of Christ (Hebrews 10).
- The kingdom was established at Pentecost and Christ reigns now (Acts 2).
- The renewing work begins now in those who are in Christ, a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17).
- It unfolds through the gospel age and is consummated in the eternal new heavens and new earth (2 Peter 3:13, Revelation 21).
- The true Zion is the heavenly Jerusalem, the church of the living God, not an earthly city (Hebrews 12:22–23, Galatians 4:26).

Discussion Prompts

- How does the new heavens and new earth begin now in Christ and find its consummation in eternity?
- Why does it matter that we read this as fulfilled in Christ and the heavenly Jerusalem rather than an earthly political kingdom?
- What hope does the promise of all things made new stir in you as we close this study?

Question 10

Student Question:

As we close the whole study, Isaiah 66:2 says God looks to the one “who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word.” Gazing back on the risen light of these chapters and the whole journey through Isaiah, name one specific way Christ has been forming you through the message of the prophet, and one step of humble, trembling obedience you will take because of it.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The book closes with two final notes held in tension, and they form a fitting end to both the lesson and the whole study. First, in 66:2, God says, “But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word.” After all the soaring visions, God’s gaze rests not on the impressive but on the lowly and trembling.

This brings the whole book full circle. Isaiah began undone before the holy God in chapter 6, crying “Woe is me.” Now at the end, God tells us what He looks for: not grand temples or great offerings, but a humble and contrite heart that trembles at His word. This is the posture the entire study should cultivate in us.

Then comes the sobering final verse, 66:24, describing the dead bodies of those who rebelled against God, where the worm does not die and the fire is not quenched. Jesus drew on this very image to speak of final judgment (Mark 9:48). Isaiah will not let us close with sentimentality; the same dawn that gladdens the redeemed exposes those who persist in rebellion.

For the capstone, the teacher should gather the whole twenty-four-lesson journey to a point. Help each student gaze once more on the risen light of Christ over Zion and name one specific way Christ has formed them through the message of Isaiah, and one step of humble, trembling obedience they will take. End the study not merely with information about a prophet but with hearts that tremble at God’s word and rest in the Redeemer who came to Zion.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God looks to the humble and contrite who tremble at His word, not to the impressive (Isaiah 66:2).
- This brings the book full circle to Isaiah’s own undoing before the holy God in chapter 6.
- The closing verse soberly portrays final judgment on persistent rebellion (Isaiah 66:24, Mark 9:48).
- Isaiah refuses sentimentality; the dawn that gladdens the redeemed exposes those who turn away.
- The fitting end of the study is hearts that tremble at God’s word and rest in the Redeemer who came to Zion.

Discussion Prompts

- Name one specific way Christ has been forming you through the message of Isaiah across this study.
- What one step of humble, trembling obedience will you take because of this journey?
- How does ending on both the humble heart of 66:2 and the judgment of 66:24 shape the way you walk out of this study?